

Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)

Mid-term Evaluation Report

French edition:

*Stratégie du Conseil de l'Europe
pour les droits de l'enfant (2016-2021)*

Rapport d'évaluation à mi-parcours

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 3 March 2016, a decade after the launch of the Council of Europe's Programme "Building a Europe for and with children", the Committee of Ministers adopted the Council of Europe's Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021).

The Strategy, which was launched during a high-level conference in Sofia, April 2016, sets out an ambitious agenda for the Council of Europe's contribution to strengthen the protection and promotion of children's rights across its 47 member states, through five priority areas of action:

1. Equal opportunities for all children
2. Participation of all children
3. A life free from violence for all children
4. Child-friendly justice for all children
5. Rights of the child in the digital environment.

This mid-term evaluation report aims to take stock of the progress achieved during the first three years of the Strategy's implementation, through action taken at both the Council of Europe and member state level, and with reference to the expected output, outcome and impact set out for each priority area.

Significant progress has been achieved across each of the five Strategy priority areas. The Council of Europe and other relevant bodies have made efforts to implement an overwhelming majority of the actions elucidated within the Strategy, with much emphasis upon mainstreaming children's rights and multi-stakeholder collaboration. At the member state level, there has been measurable progress according to each of the key outcomes and performance indicators. Further, there is a significant consensus that more children are enjoying their rights across each of the five priority areas. This suggests that all actors' efforts are combining to produce a positive impact on children's rights across Europe.

The report identifies challenges which require the Council of Europe's attention throughout the remaining implementation period of the Strategy and beyond 2021. These are challenges which have persisted, gained prominence in the collective consciousness of stakeholders, or found new formations, through developments at the global level, within societies, or through technological advancements. It also provides a brief overview of the action foreseen by the Council of Europe in the remaining years of the Strategy implementation to address these and highlights some small, potential gaps.

Finally, the report assesses whether the priority actions for the remaining implementation period of the Strategy are relevant or require adjustments. The report finds that, overall, the Strategy priorities and action-points remain well-suited to meet the challenges of the day. A small number of recommendations are made, for the purpose of incorporating certain specific challenges within the Council of Europe's planned work over the remaining Strategy years. Finally, a number of developments, not fully covered by the Strategy or its action plan, are identified. These may be considered when drafting the next Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) or when determining future collaboration and mainstreaming activities.

INTRODUCTION

Since launching the Programme “Building a Europe for and with children” in Monaco in 2006, the Council of Europe has implemented strategies over a series of policy cycles to guide its work on strengthening child rights protection in Europe. The third Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) was launched in Sofia in April 2016. It identified the major challenges for the rights of the child, five priority areas and actions for meeting those challenges and working methods to deliver the Strategy. The five priority areas for children’s rights are:

1. Equal opportunities for all children
2. Participation of all children
3. A life free from violence for all children
4. Child-friendly justice for all children
5. Rights of the child in the digital environment.

Chapter IV, point 4 of the Strategy provides for a mid-term evaluation, with the possibility for adjustments, to be carried out after three years under the guidance of member states and other relevant stakeholders.

The aim of the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy is to provide visibility to both the achievements made so far in its implementation and the obstacles that lie in the way of its successful completion until 2021. In particular, the review aims to:

- (i) take stock of the progress achieved during the first three years of the Strategy’s implementation;
- (ii) identify persisting and emerging challenges that the current Strategy might not address, and which would need the Council of Europe’s attention in the coming years beyond 2021;
- (iii) assess whether the priority actions for the three remaining years are relevant or need adjustments.

Assessment

Chapter IV, point 4 of the Strategy states that progress will be evaluated against the objectives, with reference to the expected impact, outcome and output set out for each priority area and based on a set of indicators. These indicators are summarised in “tower” visuals, which have been replicated throughout this mid-term evaluation report as a point of reference. The Strategy Action Plan, updated in 2019, contains a list of expected outcomes and key performance indicators under each priority area and is also replicated in this report. These sources serve as a checklist guiding the evaluation process. In the course of this exercise, it is important, however, to keep in mind that the action of the Council of Europe, as an intergovernmental organisation, is mediated through the action of its member states’ governments, which are driving the Strategy’s implementation along with other stakeholders.

On 1 January 2016, the world began implementing the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,¹ an ambitious and universal vision, based on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS), as well as 169 associated targets, which are all integrated, indivisible and interlinked. The strengthening of partnerships is one of the global goals. Partnerships should bring together governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system, regional organisations such as the Council of Europe and other actors to mobilise all available resources.

¹ See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>.

Recognising the intrinsic link between sustainable development and the protection of human rights, and building on its standards, intergovernmental platforms and monitoring bodies, the Council of Europe is committed to working with and supporting its 47 member states in implementing the 2030 Agenda through a wide range of actions. As such, gearing the implementation of Council of Europe standards towards the achievement of the SDGs related to children's rights and the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda has been identified as a transversal output for the Strategy.

This report also maps out the links between the SDGs and the Strategy aims and goals. In so doing, evaluation of the Strategy can serve as an indirect evaluation of the member states' progress in implementing the UN SDGs.

Sources of information

To determine input, the report draws on the instruments and documents produced across the Council of Europe, including the main findings of its monitoring bodies.

Several questionnaires aimed at a range of stakeholders have been created and disseminated for the purpose of the outcomes and impact of the Strategy, as well as persisting or emerging challenges and promising practices:

- ▶ Member states were invited to respond to an online questionnaire covering the implementation of the Strategy, in general, and within four of the Strategy priority areas, excluding violence against children (hereafter the "member state survey"). A total of 42 responses² from 34 member states³ were received;
- ▶ A more in-depth evaluation of outcomes and challenges in priority area 3 - "A life free from violence for all children" - was conducted with the support of the Group of Experts on Responses to violence against children and included a separate questionnaire aimed at member states. 38 responses from member states were received and forms the subject of a separate report⁴ (hereafter: "VAC Report"). A summary of the results is provided herein;
- ▶ A simplified questionnaire for civil society and international organisations on implementation of the Strategy across Europe and/or within individual member states attracted 9 responses from national and international NGOs as well as intergovernmental organisations;
- ▶ Child consultations on each of the five Strategy priority areas were carried out with a total of 52 participating children between the ages of 10 and 18. The consultations took place across four member states and were carried out through the children's rights network Eurochild⁵ and its implementing partners.

For further information on the questionnaires and a list of respondents, see the Appendix.

The report also draws on the regular reports on national achievements and challenges, provided by members of the Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF) during its plenary meetings ("CAHENF compilations") and member state resources provided for the purpose of establishing a Clearinghouse platform on responses to violence against children. The overall co-ordination and compilation of the report was done within the Children's Rights Division of the Council of Europe where several staff members have contributed to this work.

² Switzerland's three partial responses are considered "one response".

³ Multiple responses were received by different bodies in respect of Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Montenegro, Sweden and Ukraine. Where both a governmental body and Ombudspersons or National Human Rights Institution responded for one member State, the former is considered in analysis and discussion of "member state" responses. The latter is considered in analysis and discussion of "civil society and international organisations" responses.

⁴ Council of Europe (2019), Report on the third priority area of the Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2016-2021): "A life free from violence for all children".

⁵ <https://www.eurochild.org/>

LOOKING BACK: PROGRESS MADE 2016-2019

Across the Council of Europe, member states and a range of other relevant stakeholders, impressive efforts have been made in furtherance of implementing the Strategy. In line with the Strategy document measures for progress, the following section considers the outputs of the Council of Europe, its actions to mitigate risks, outcomes at member state level and the impact that this is having upon children's enjoyment of their rights. Under each of the five priority areas, progress is measured against the "tower visuals" provided in the Strategy document, the action points as described within the Strategy and the key performance indicators, developed through the Strategy Action Plan. A mapping exercise of relevant UN SDGs and the Strategy priorities has also been undertaken. Emphasis is placed upon providing examples, or "highlights" of action from member states or other stakeholders, which may serve as inspiration to others.

THE STRATEGY AS A WHOLE

Outputs, delivering the Strategy

The Strategy is widely accessible at the national level. It has been translated into 19 languages, the vast majority of which are accessible via the Council of Europe or national websites.

Overall, nearly 300 activities⁶ have been commenced or completed by the Council of Europe which further implementation of the Strategy since its launch in 2016, spanning from legal standards, monitoring work and co-operation projects to studies and consultations, educational or practical tools and awareness-raising campaigns.

Making the standards work for children

Efforts have been made to make the Strategy work for children. For this purpose, the Council of Europe has concentrated its resources on the implementation of existing standards. It has followed up on implementation and supported further translation and promotion of, in particular:

- ▶ The Recommendation on child-friendly social services;⁷
- ▶ The Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18;⁸
- ▶ Guidelines on integrated strategies on violence against children;⁹
- ▶ The Recommendation on policy to support positive parenting;¹⁰
- ▶ The Recommendation on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors;¹¹
- ▶ Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment.¹²

⁶ Including key activities under cooperation and other projects. An updated action plan will be released in October 2019.

⁷ CM/Rec(2011)12.

⁸ CM/Rec(2012)2.

⁹ CM/Rec(2009)10.

¹⁰ CM/Rec(2006)19.

¹¹ CM/Rec(2007)9.

¹² CM/Rec(2018)7.

STRATEGY BY LANGUAGE

[Azerbaijani](#)

[Bosnian](#)

[Bulgarian](#)

[Croatian](#)

[English](#)

[French](#)

[German](#)

[Italian](#)

[Latvian](#)

[Montenegrin](#)

[Polish](#)

[Portuguese](#)

[Russian](#)

[Serbian](#)

[Slovak](#)

[Slovene](#)

[Spanish](#)

[Turkish](#)

[Ukrainian](#)

Children’s rights have been mainstreamed across the Council of Europe, through approximately 50 co-operation projects and key activities.¹³ Building on the achievements under the previous Strategy, **the rights of the child have continued to be addressed in the Council of Europe’s thematic and country-based convention monitoring**, including by:

- ▶ The Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee);
- ▶ The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA);
- ▶ The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO);
- ▶ The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC);
- ▶ The European Committee of Social Rights (ESC);
- ▶ The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (COMEX);
- ▶ The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT).

Further monitoring work has been undertaken by the Human Rights Commissioner, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roman and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) and bodies under the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS). **More systematic co-operation with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** has been achieved, including through regular submission of compilations on the findings of Council of Europe monitoring activity, for the purpose of the CRC’s “concluding observations” on Council of Europe member state Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Optional Protocols. **Increased efforts have been put into co-operation activities across and within countries**, including through 26 projects in Council of Europe member states. There have also been 33 projects in the framework of the Council of Europe policy towards neighbouring regions, notably in Tunisia and Morocco.

Involving all relevant stakeholders¹⁴

The implementation of the Strategy has been guided and evaluated by the Ad hoc Committee on the Rights of the Child (CAHENF),¹⁵ which is composed of representatives of the Council of Europe member states and other relevant stakeholders. In pursuit of **fostering co-operation and co-ordination** with other international organisations, the CAHENF meetings have been attended by representatives of, inter alia, the European Commission, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Refugees; UNICEF, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS).

The Council of Europe has **continued its close co-operation with the European Union**, as a key partner in promoting the implementation of Council of Europe standards, including through several major joint projects (“Human Rights and Democracy in Action” pilot projects, Pro Safe Sport + (addressing child sexual abuse in sport), INSCHOOL, “Barnahus/“Children’s House” in Slovenia).¹⁶

Co-operation efforts have continued with the Ombudspersons for Children and their European network (ENOC), as well as international and national NGOs as important implementing partners for the Council of Europe. For example, training has been organised for ENOC members on engagement with and use of Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms. Training on

¹³ An updated action plan will be released in October 2019.

¹⁴ For our work involving child participation, please see below (“Priority area 2: Participation of all children – Outputs & mitigating action”).

¹⁵ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/cahenf>.

¹⁶ Discussed below (“Priority area 4: Child-friendly justice for all children – Outputs & mitigating action”).

monitoring mechanisms has also been carried out for the Eurochild National Partner Networks. The CAHENF meetings have been attended by numerous international NGO representations as observers.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has been a crucial partner in achieving the Strategy objectives: notably through actions within the remit of the PACE Campaign to End Immigration Detention; initiatives on social rights, children on the move or otherwise affected by migration, child participation and child sexual abuse and exploitation; meetings, reports, and the passing of resolutions and recommendations touching upon many aspects of the Strategy priority areas. The **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities** has taken focussed action in relation to refugee children and in the promotion of town and regional efforts to stop sexual violence against children. The **Council of Europe Conference of INGOs** has notably organised initiatives to mark the annual International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, with a focus on child-poverty. Finally, the **Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights** has continued to monitor the rights of children belonging to disadvantaged groups, and in particular, the situation of children in detention.

Communicating children's rights

Action has been taken by the Council of Europe and jointly with member states to raise awareness of children's rights among all stakeholders. Efforts have been put into producing and disseminating awareness-raising materials, such as video clips, across a range of sectors and projects. Meanwhile, the website www.coe.int/children has been further developed into a "European hub", notably through creation of a repository of good practices promoting non-violent parenting; and the establishment of a "Clearinghouse" (online platform) on responses to violence against children. Among the Council of Europe's webpages, the Children's Rights page has attracted some of the highest rates of traffic in recent years. The Council of Europe has also developed and disseminates periodic newsletters to communicate developments in children's rights and upcoming events.

Outcomes & impact

The Strategy has been widely disseminated and promoted at member state level. Member states reported that the Strategy had been promoted at national level through translation into a local language, dissemination to relevant departments, authorities and members of civil society and through posting the Strategy on governmental, Ombudsperson and NGO websites. Approximately half of the member state respondents stated that they were aware of a translation in their national language(s). There is, however, room for greater coordination between the national and Council of Europe level. In some cases, translations have been made available by national institutions, but are not currently displayed on the Council of Europe website.¹⁷ At the same time, not all member state respondents were aware of an existing translation in their national language(s), despite its presence on the Council of Europe website. While significant progress has already been made, it was also suggested that the Strategy could be made available in further languages.

The Strategy has had a positive impact on strategic action at the national level. In the survey, 26 member state respondents said that the Strategy had been used in their country to inspire a national or regional strategy or action plan to further children's rights. Several respondents spoke of other ways in which the Strategy had been used – for example, to inspire more general state action in the area of children's rights. Others currently have in place national strategies that are based upon the previous Council of Europe Strategy 2012-2015. For others, still, action plans or national strategies for the rights of the child have been adopted which, although not explicitly relying on the Council of Europe Strategy, are aligned with its principles.

¹⁷ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/language-versions>.

The following table highlights dedicated national or regional strategies and action plans introduced (or planned) since 2016:¹⁸

Member state	National strategy or action plan
Albania	National Agenda for Children's Rights 2017-2020
Armenia	National Action Plan for the protection of the rights of children 2017-2021
Belgium	Flemish Youth and Children's Policy Plan; Wallonia Action Plan on the Rights of the Child
Bulgaria	The National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030; annual National Child Protection Programme
Croatia	Action Plans for the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2014-2017
France	National Strategy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents
Greece	National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child
Iceland	Action Plan on Children
Italy	Plan of Action and Interventions for the Protection of Children's Rights and Development
Republic of Moldova	Action Plan for the implementation of the Child Protection Strategy 2016-2020
Montenegro	National Strategy for the Exercise of Children's Rights 2019-2023; Action Plan 2019-2020
Portugal	National Strategy for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; National Strategy on Children Rights 2019-2020
Republic of Serbia	Renewed National Action Plan for Children
Russian Federation	Plan of Main Activities up to 2020 (carried out in the framework of the Decade of Childhood Programme)
Slovenia	Strategic Programme for Children
Spain	Third National Strategy Plan for Childhood 2018-2022
Ukraine	National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for the period up to 2021

Impact has been significant but varied across the five priority areas at the national level.

20 member state respondents indicated that the Strategy had been particularly positively implemented in the area of equal opportunities for all children; 20 in participation for all children; 17 in a life free from violence from all children; 18 on child-friendly justice; and 14 in the rights of the child in the digital environment. 13 member states felt that implementation of the Strategy had been particularly positive in all five priority areas.

¹⁸ Based on member state survey responses and/or CAHENF compilations. Non-exhaustive.

Highlights

The Council of Europe Strategy (2016-2021) was launched in Sofia, **Bulgaria** in 2016 at a High-Level Conference.¹⁹ Through the conference, the Strategy received a wide public response and the principles therein have been laid down in a series of legal and policy standards, including the Bulgarian National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030 and the National Programme for the Prevention of Violence and Child Abuse 2017-2020.

In **Germany**, the newly-established Coordination Office for Children's Rights at the German Children's Fund (DKHW) has been supporting the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth to implement the Council of Europe's Strategy. Activities in 2017-2018 focussed on the thematic areas of child-friendly justice and participation. The Coordination Office has also been supporting the Ministry in the CRC reporting process.

The **European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)** discussed the mid-term progress and review of the Council of Europe Strategy during a Seminar in June 2019.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Council of Europe Supports member states in their efforts to implement the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and achieve its 17 Goals. Many of the SDGs and targets are directly relevant to children and their rights. Most obviously, the Agenda includes ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all (Goal 4), achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (Goal 5) and ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children (Target 16.2). But there are many further connections between the Agenda and children's rights.²⁰

The actions taken by the Council of Europe and its members states under each of the Strategy priority areas, and discussed in the following sub-sections, contribute towards the fulfilment of numerous UN SDGs. **The Council of Europe has also explicitly set out its contribution and its member states' commitment to the UN SDGs across various areas of its work.**²¹ In particular, the PACE recently passed a Resolution on ending violence against children: a Council of Europe contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.²² The Council of Europe annual programme and budget 2018-2019 contains an appendix displaying a breakdown of its contribution towards the SDGs.²³ Documents detailing the Council of Europe's contribution towards Goal 5 (Gender Equality)²⁴ and Target 16.2 (Ending violence against children),²⁵ among others, have also been published.

Responses to the various questionnaires suggest that member states are taking the task of reaching the UN SDGs which concern children seriously. A large majority of member states responding to the survey said that the work carried out by their institutions, administration or service was linked to reaching the SDGs. Member states have adapted the SDGs to the national context by publishing action plans, strategies or legal standards and have developed monitoring mechanisms to oversee national implementation. Since they began in 2016, nearly all member states have taken part in at least one voluntary national review for the purpose of the UN High-Level Political Forum.²⁶ Many

¹⁹ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/sofia2016>.

²⁰ See discussions under each of the five Strategy priority areas.

²¹ See further Council of Europe Contribution to the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/un-agenda-2030/home?desktop=true>.

²² Res 2294(2019).

²³ See <http://rm.coe.int/programme-and-budget/168076fe98>.

²⁴ Council of Europe (2018), Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls: The Council of Europe's contribution to the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

²⁵ Council of Europe, Ending all forms of violence against children by 2030: The Council of Europe's contribution to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

²⁶ See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>. Austria, Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine are scheduled to undertake their first voluntary national review in 2020.

member states have also reported taking action under specific areas in aid of various Goals related to children's rights.

It is also clear that other stakeholders, including Ombudspersons, international or national NGOs and international organisations are taking steps to support member states in the achievement of the UN SDGs, through monitoring progress, funding projects, or creating practical tools, for example.

Highlights

Ireland has adopted a "whole-of-government" approach to achieve the UN SDGs by 2030, meaning every governmental department has been given a role to implement the Goals, together with state agencies and local authorities.

The Republic of Moldova's 2030 National Development Strategy was approved by Parliament in 2018. **Montenegro** adopted a National Strategy for Sustainable Development by 2030 in July 2016; it was one of the first countries in the world to fully integrate the UN Agenda 2030 into its national system.

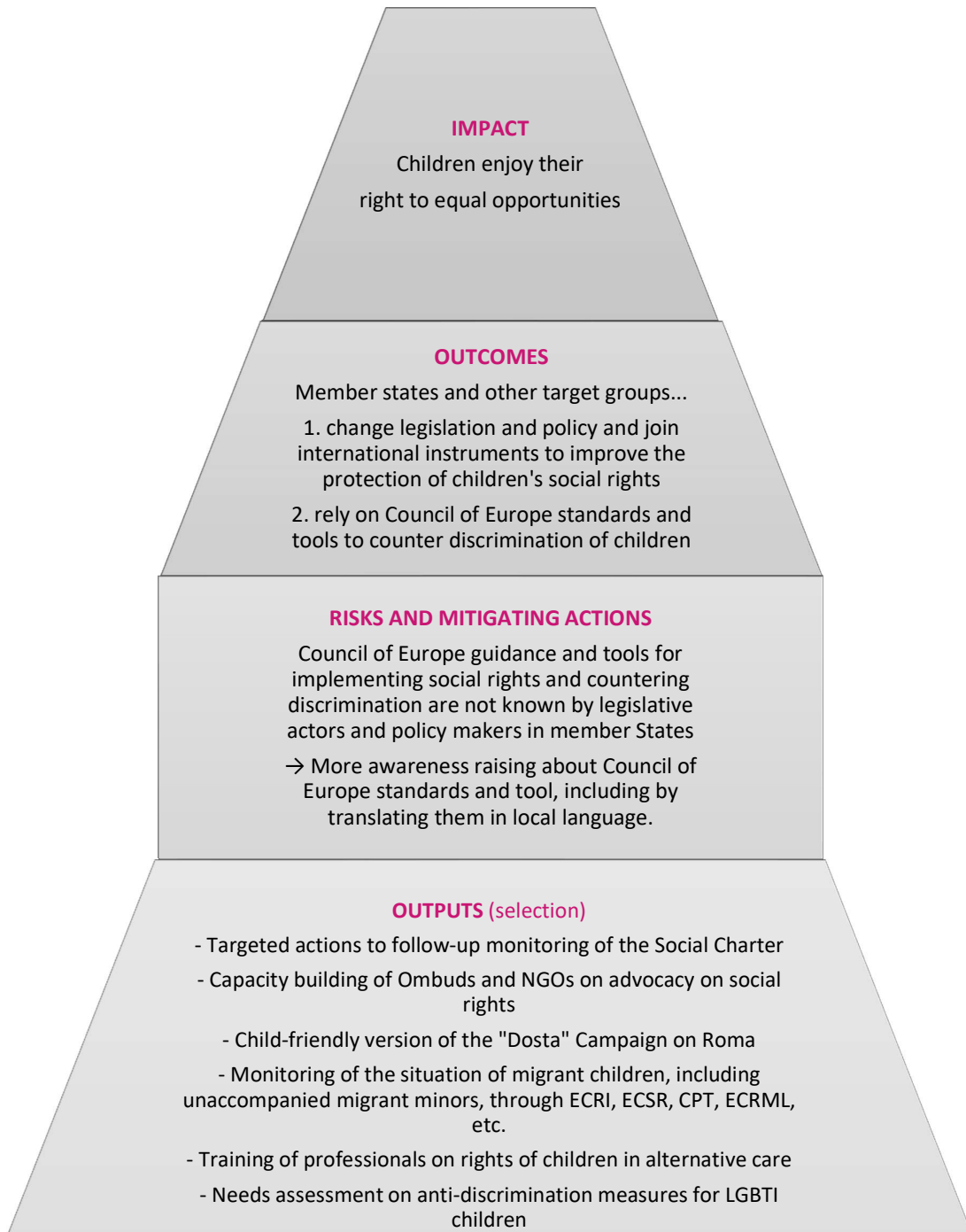
In **Romania**, the Department for Sustainable Development was created in 2017, for the purpose of implementing the 2030 Agenda. In **Slovenia**, the "Agenda 2030 Coordination Department" has been created. The departments are tasked with conceptualising and/or coordinating the implementation activities necessary to transpose the SDGs onto the national level.

In February 2018, **Sweden** organised the first ever Agenda 2030 for Children: End Violence Solutions Summit, together with the Global Partnership and We Protect Global Alliance.

The **Council of Baltic Sea States** has published a report "Baltic 2030: Bumps on the Road" (2017) on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within the Baltic Sea Region.

PRIORITY AREA 1: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN

Strategy performance indicators



Action plan: key performance indicators

1. Evidence of change in legislation and policy to improve the protection of children's social rights
2. Evidence of change in legislation and policy to better protect children from discrimination
3. Documented use by member states and other target groups of Council of Europe standards and tools to counter discrimination of children

The UN SDGs and equal opportunities for all children

SDG	Targets relevant to equal opportunities for all children	Relation to the CoE Strategy
1. No poverty	<p>1.1 Eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere</p> <p>1.2 Reduce by at least half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions</p> <p>1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable</p>	<p>1.1 Guaranteeing children's social rights</p> <p>[28] Tackling child poverty</p>
2. Zero hunger	<p>2.1 End hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round</p> <p>2.2 End all forms of malnutrition</p>	<p>1.1 Guaranteeing children's social rights</p> <p>[28] Tackling child poverty</p>
3. Good health and well-being	<p>3.2 End preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age</p> <p>3.4 Reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being</p> <p>3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol</p> <p>3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all</p>	<p>1.1 Guaranteeing children's social rights</p> <p>[28] Ensuring preventive measures, child-friendly social services and healthcare</p>
4. Quality education	<p>4.1 Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal 4-effective learning outcomes</p> <p>4.2 Ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education</p> <p>4.5 Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations</p> <p>4.A Build and upgrade education facilities that are child disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all</p>	<p>1.1 Guaranteeing children's social rights</p> <p>[28] Ensuring early childhood education</p> <p>1.2 Countering discrimination</p> <p>[33] Protecting use of minority languages in school</p> <p>[34] Ensuring inclusive education of Roma children</p> <p>[35] Address stereotypes and sexism in education</p>
5. Gender equality	<p>5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere</p> <p>5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels</p>	<p>1.2 Countering discrimination</p> <p>[35] Fighting discrimination on the grounds of gender</p>

8. Decent work and economic growth	8.5 Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people	1.1 Guaranteeing children's social rights [27]-[28] Tackling child poverty, providing family support, early childhood education and care [28] Social reintegration of children living and/or working on the streets [32] Tackling trafficking of children on the move or otherwise affected by migration [32] Countering discrimination of children on the move or otherwise affected by migration
	8.6 Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training	
	8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour	
	8.10 Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and to expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all	
10. Reduced inequalities	10.1 Progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population	1.1 Guaranteeing children's social rights [26]-[28] Ensuring the right of children to an adequate standard of living [28] Tackling social exclusion 1.2 Countering discrimination [29] Ensuring non-discrimination [32] Protecting and promoting the rights of children on the move or otherwise affected by migration
	10.2 Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status	
	10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard	
	10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality	
	10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies	
11. Sustainable cities and communities	11.1 Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services	1.1. Guaranteeing children's social rights [28] Ensuring social services and housing policies 1.2 Countering discrimination [30] Ensuring full inclusion of children with disabilities in society
	11.2 Provide access to safe, affordable accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, children, persons with disabilities	
	11.7 Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for children and persons with disabilities	
	11.A Support positive economic and social links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning	
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	16.9 Provide legal identity for all, including birth registration	1.2 Countering discrimination [29] Ensuring the right and principle of non-discrimination
	16.B Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development	
17. Partnerships for the goals	17.18 Enhance capacity building to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts	[28] Supporting introduction and enhancing the quality and effect of child impact assessments

"Equal opportunities for all children" include the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, spiritual, moral and social development, and the rights of children to appropriate social, legal and economic protection. This priority area of the Strategy focusses on guaranteeing children's social rights and countering discrimination.

Outputs & mitigating actions

Guaranteeing children's social rights

The European Social Charter, as a key set of minimum standards safeguarding the social rights of families and children, has been promoted. **There has been targeted action to follow up on the conclusions and decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) on provisions relevant to children's rights.** The ECSR has made, and followed up on, a number of collective complaints²⁷ decisions relating to inclusive education,²⁸ standards of living for Roma families²⁹ and the rights of unaccompanied children.³⁰ A report has recently been prepared on the role that children's rights and related mechanisms play in protecting children from poverty, and particularly those of the European Social Charter. It advocated for greater engagement of different Council of Europe bodies and committees and highlighted the need for the ECSR to engage with child poverty as a cross-cutting thematic issue as well as to clarify its approach to Article 30 ESC. The Committee of Ministers passed a resolution in 2017 on the implementation of the European Social Charter (Conclusions 2015), which related to the thematic group of provisions on "children, families and migrants", recommending that governments take account of the conclusions and the report of the Governmental Committee.³¹ In 2016, and following the 2015 Conclusions, the PACE held a parliamentary seminar on "the right of children and young people to social, legal and economic protection" to address "children at work" and "corporal punishment" within the member states concerned, with the aim of discussing remaining challenges and good practice examples.

Steps have been taken to support capacity-building of Ombudspersons and NGOs on advocacy on social rights. The Council of Europe provided training for National Human Rights Institutions and NGOs at ENOC's 23rd annual conference. Participants were trained on methods or routes for engaging with and using the European Social Charter and other Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms, standards and reports insofar as they relate to children's rights, including their social rights. The Council of Europe has also assisted in the publication of an advocacy toolkit on engaging children in advocacy work on children's rights.³² It was developed with Eurochild and is aimed at NGOs and other stakeholders.

Awareness-raising action for Council of Europe tools and standards relating to child poverty and social inclusion has been taken. Numerous language translations of key documents are now available on the Council of Europe children's rights website.³³ The Recommendation on child-

²⁷ Under the Additional Protocol providing for a system of collective complaints, ETS No. 158. The Additional Protocol has been ratified by 15 member states.

²⁸ Decision made in e.g. *Mental Disability Advocacy Center (MDAC) v. Belgium*, Complaint No. 109/2014, decision on the merits on 16 October 2017; Follow-up on e.g. *Mental Disability Advocacy Center (MDAC) v. Bulgaria*, Complaint No. 41/2007, decision on the merits of 3 June 2008; *Autism-Europe v. France*, Complaint No. 13/2002, decision on the merits of 4 November 2003; *European Action of the Disabled (AEH) v. France*, Complaint No. 81/2012, decision on the merits of 11 September 2013.

²⁹ Decision made in e.g. *European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) v. France*, Complaint No. 119/2015, decision on the merits on 05 September 2017; Follow-up on e.g. *European Roma Rights Centre v. Bulgaria*, Complaint No. 31/2005, decision on the merits of 18 October 2006; *International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights (INTERIGHTS) v. Greece*, Complaint No. 49/2008, decision on the merits of 11 December; *European Roma Rights Centre v. Portugal*, Complaint No. 61/2010, decision on the merits of 30 June 2011.

³⁰ *European Committee for Home-Based Priority Action for the Child and the Family (EUROCEF) v. France*, complaint No. 114/2015, decision on the merits on 24 January 2018.

³¹ Resolution CM/ResChS(2017)6 on the implementation of the European Social Charter during the period 2010-2013 (Conclusions 2015), provisions related to the thematic group "Children, families, migrants".

³² Eurochild (2018), Advocacy Toolkit: Training tool on engaging children in advocacy work on their right to participate in decision-making processes.

³³ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/language-versions>.

friendly social services is currently available in 14 languages; the Recommendation of child-friendly healthcare in 6; and the Recommendation on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights in 7. In 2016, the Council of Europe published a report on the implementation of the Recommendation on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families.³⁴ Recently, the Department for Family Policies of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the European Social Cohesion Platform (PECS) of the Council of Europe organised a Joint Workshop on family as a hub for social policies, with a thematic focus on eradication of child poverty.

Action has been taken to promote inclusive education. The Human Rights Commissioner has written a position paper with key principles and recommendations on combating school segregation through inclusive education.³⁵ A number of actions for particular groups of children have been taken, as detailed below. The Council of Europe has also published a leaflet and dedicated webpage on its contribution to UN SDG Goal 4 (quality education).³⁶

School segregation: Findings of the Human Rights Commissioner

The Human Rights Commissioner's position paper found that "[s]ubstantial numbers of children across Europe are educated in schools with high concentrations of children who are disadvantaged on the basis of their socio-economic, ethnic or cultural background, or because of a disability".³⁷ A number of main causes of segregation were identified, including wide margins of discretion and inappropriate regulation of school admissions/access, financial arrangements which strengthen resistance to desegregation, deeply rooted prejudice towards ethnic groups (especially the Roma community) and reduced funding of education as a result of austerity. Lower quality education in schools could also serve as a cause and consequence of school segregation.

Countering discrimination

Action has been taken at the Council of Europe level to support the right to non-discrimination, particularly with regard to vulnerable groups of children.

Regarding **children with disabilities**, the Council of Europe adopted its new Disability Strategy: Human Rights, a reality for all (2017-2023). It explicitly references the Strategy for the Rights of the Child and dedicates sections to quality education, both on and for children with disabilities. The Council of Europe has commissioned an innovative study and report on the experiences of children with disabilities in the digital environment, which involved extensive consultation with children of varying ages and disabilities. The Human Rights Commissioner has issued several country reports examining the key challenges for protecting the rights of children with disabilities,³⁸ and comments on respecting the human rights of persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities.³⁹

The rights of **children in all forms of alternative care** have been supported through promotion and dissemination of a guide for professionals working in alternative care⁴⁰ and a child-friendly brochure for children and young people in care,⁴¹ jointly produced by SOS Children's Villages International and the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe provided technical assistance to Ukraine in assessing existing legislation for responding to child abuse cases in alternative care institutions. The Committee of

³⁴ Council of Europe (2016), Children's Rights and Social Services: Report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Recommendation on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families.

³⁵ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2017), Positions on combating school segregation through inclusive education. Available in Albanian, English, Bosnian, Croatian and French.

³⁶ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/vision-for-a-quality-education>.

³⁷ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2017), Positions on combating school segregation through inclusive education, page 7.

³⁸ See further <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/country-monitoring>.

³⁹ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2018), Comments on the draft Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights in Biomedicine concerning the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of Persons with Mental Disorder with regard to Involuntary Placement and Involuntary Treatment.

⁴⁰ Council of Europe (2014), Securing Children's Rights: A guide for professionals working in alternative care.

⁴¹ Council of Europe (2009), Children and young people in care: Discover your rights!

Ministers Recommendation on the rights of children living in residential institutions⁴² continues to be promoted online and through a brochure.⁴³ The Lanzarote Committee recently adopted a declaration on protecting children in out-of-home care from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.⁴⁴

Work to protect and promote the rights of **children on the move or otherwise affected by migration** has been prioritised under the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees (SRSG),⁴⁵ who was appointed in January 2016. An Action Plan on protecting refugee and migrant children (2017-2019)⁴⁶ and a mid-term report on the plan,⁴⁷ have been adopted. Per the strategy performance indicators, numerous Council of Europe bodies have contributed towards monitoring the situation of migrant children in Europe.⁴⁸ During his mandate, the SRSG conducted fact-finding visits in 11 member states,⁴⁹ with the rights of migrant and refugee children forming the topic of a thematic report.⁵⁰ The SRSG has carried out a thematic assessment on the integration of migrants and refugees in selected member states, with a focus on child migrant and refugee integration. Special attention has been paid to the situation of unaccompanied minors and the links between migration, trafficking and sexual abuse. GRETA conducted urgent monitoring rounds on victims of trafficking among unaccompanied children⁵¹ and produced a thematic monitoring and activity report chapter on trafficking and children.⁵² The Lanzarote Committee conducted a fact-finding mission in transit zones at the Serbian/Hungarian border and adopted a special report⁵³ and declaration⁵⁴ on protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. The Recommendation on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors⁵⁵ has been followed up by an implementation survey, to which members of the CAHENF were invited to respond.

The situation of migrant and refugee children: Findings of the SRSG on Migration and Refugees

The SRSG's report, based on fact-finding missions to member states, found numerous shortcomings in the protection of refugee and migrant children. Age assessment measures were not always comprehensive and unaccompanied children were not always identified, registered and provided with a guardian, exposing them to serious protection risks and a vacuum in their ability to access and enjoy their rights. Procedures also did not always guarantee effective identification of trafficking victims. Some reception conditions were described as "abysmal", while there was evidence of children being detained and separated from a parent. Children were rarely provided with child-friendly information, the assistance of an interpreter or free legal aid and access to education and health services were very limited. Member state relocation pledges were insufficient, as were procedures to reunify families and reduce statelessness. Finally, protection and support of unaccompanied minors transitioning to adulthood was found lacking.

⁴² CM/Rec(2005)5.

⁴³ Available in English, French, Bulgarian, Czech, Lithuanian, Romanian, Russian, Turkish and Ukrainian. See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/alternative-care>.

⁴⁴ (adopted at its 25th meeting, 15-18 October 2019).

⁴⁵ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/special-representative-secretary-general-migration-refugees/special-representative>.

⁴⁶ Available in English, French, German, Italian and Turkish.

⁴⁷ Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, "Refugee and migrant children in Europe" – Progress in implementation of the Action Plan (2017-2019), September 2018.

⁴⁸ E.g. ECRI, ECRML, CPT, GRETA, Lanzarote Committee.

⁴⁹ See the country reports, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/special-representative-secretary-general-migration-refugees/country-reports>.

⁵⁰ Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees (2017), Thematic Report on Migrant and refugee children.

⁵¹ For Italy and Hungary.

⁵² GRETA (2018), Thematic Chapter of the 6th General Report on GRETA's activities.

⁵³ Lanzarote Committee (2017), Special Report on Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

⁵⁴ Lanzarote Committee Declaration on protecting migrant and refugee children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (adopted 28 June 2018).

⁵⁵ CM/Rec(2007)9.

A number of practical tools and standards have been developed to uphold the rights of refugee and migrant children. An overview is provided, below:

Product	Languages	Target audience
HELP Course on refugee and migrant children	English	Legal professionals
Handbook on how to convey child-friendly information to children in migration	English, French, Portuguese, Spanish	Frontline professionals
Your rights in age assessment procedures: Information for children in migration	English, French	Frontline & legal professionals
Information leaflet - An age assessment procedure that respects children's rights (with Portugal)	English, French, Portuguese	Children, Child protection services
Committee of Ministers draft Recommendation on Human rights principles and implementing guidelines on age assessment for children in migration (to be adopted)	English, French	Member states
Committee of Ministers draft Recommendation on Effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in migration (to be adopted)	English, French	Member states

The Council of Europe has continued to protect and promote the rights of **children from minorities**. Notably, the COMEX has carried out monitoring work on the rights of children regarding the use of regional and minority languages, and particularly their right to speak regional and minority languages in the educational context.⁵⁶ The ACFC has also continued its monitoring work on the protection of the rights of children from minorities.⁵⁷ The Council of Europe has adapted and translated child-friendly materials into non-official, regional and minority languages, which are freely available on its children's rights website.⁵⁸

Action has been taken to promote the implementation of **Roma children's** rights. Steps have been taken to encourage inclusive education, including recommendations issued by the Human Rights Commissioner⁵⁹ and the launch of a joint Council of Europe-EU project "Inclusive schools: making a difference for Roma children" (INSCHOOL) across five countries.⁶⁰ The ROMED joint programme has continued to train mediators and help to deliver mediation between the Roma community and local authorities.⁶¹ In accordance with the strategy performance indicators, child-friendly "Dosta!" campaign videos have been launched.⁶²

⁵⁶ See COMEX country reports, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/reports-and-recommendations>.

⁵⁷ See ACFC country reports, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/country-specific-monitoring>.

⁵⁸ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/language-versions>.

⁵⁹ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2017), Position Paper: Fighting school segregation in Europe through inclusive education. Available in Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, English, French.

⁶⁰ See <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/inclusive-education-for-roma-children>.

⁶¹ See <http://coe-romed.org/fr>.

⁶² Available through the Council of Europe Human Rights Channel, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-channel>.

Roma Children: Findings of ECRI⁶³

In its 2019 annual report, ECRI found that Roma continue to be affected by poverty, extremely low levels of education and often desolate and insecure housing conditions. In many member states, enrolment rates of Roma children in pre-school, although slightly improved, remain low, while drop-out rates before finishing secondary school remain unacceptably high: matters which, in turn, lead to high rates of unemployment. The absence of sufficient regular income and the presence of widespread discrimination and prejudice against Roma perpetuates severe poverty for Roma families. While it observed some progress, including through increased training of Roma mediators and their outreach work in school and healthcare services, there is a need for a massive scale-up of Roma support activities to break cycles of poverty and social exclusion. Long-term funding for Roma strategies and action plans was also lacking.

Fighting discrimination and promoting **gender equality between boys and girls** is a priority in the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023). Gender equality continues to be mainstreamed in all activities on children's rights, while an intersectional approach to discrimination has been taken in work relating to the rights of girls in migration, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation.⁶⁴ To address stereotypes and sexism, the Committee of Ministers adopted a Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism,⁶⁵ while an online Wikigender discussion on "addressing gender stereotypes in the classroom" was organised in 2017, in partnership with UNESCO and other partners.

Steps have also been taken to address discrimination against **LGBT and intersex children**. In particular, research has been undertaken on the basis of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5⁶⁶ on educational sector responses to violence against LGBTI children in schools.⁶⁷ An analysis of practices and policies to combat discrimination against LGBTI children has also been published.⁶⁸

Outcomes & impact

There is clear evidence of positive outcomes at member state level under this priority area.

The vast majority of member states reported a change in legislation or policy for the purpose of **tackling child poverty and social exclusion**. Of those responding to the member state survey, nearly all stated that they had used the standards and tools issued by the Council of Europe for these purposes. Member state survey responses suggest that the European Social Charter and the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on child-friendly social services are being relied upon across many member states. The Recommendation on child-friendly healthcare, meanwhile, is enjoying only moderate use, while the Recommendation on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights is being used by a relatively small number.

Other stakeholders have relied on and engaged with the Council of Europe's standards on social rights and discrimination, including through engagement with the European Social Charter's collective complaints mechanism.

⁶³ ECRI (2019), Annual report on ECRI's activities covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018.

⁶⁴ See further the Council of Europe Gender Equality webpage, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/home>.

⁶⁵ CM/Rec(2019)1.

⁶⁶ Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Available in Albanian, English, French, German, Georgian, Greek, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Montenegrin, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Spanish, Turkish.

⁶⁷ Council of Europe (2018), Safe at school: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics in Europe.

⁶⁸ Council of Europe (2016), Equal opportunities for all children: Non-discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) children and young people.

Highlights

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, **Save the Children** have helped to establish drop-in centres across several cantons for street children or those in other vulnerable centres. These centres provide food, creative and educational workshops, school support and family strengthening programmes.

France has developed a National Strategy for the Prevention of and Struggle against Poverty, with particular focus on combating child and youth poverty. The policies focus on long-term, sustainable solutions which focus on investment and tackling the root causes of poverty.

In **Italy**, the project “La scuola al centro” was launched by the Ministry of Education in 2016, which aims to support the increase in educational resources in schools, to fight against school drop-out and to promote social inclusion. The project focussed on the suburbs and in disadvantaged areas. Programmes were centred around the application of non-verbal communication and artistic and sporting activities.

In **Latvia**, the “Family Friendly Municipality” initiative has been set up by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, which assesses Latvian authorities and rewards those that are found to provide diverse and accessible support measures to families with children.

San Marino has passed a decree on the standards of the right to education, training and inclusive education of persons with disabilities. The decree sets new standards to guarantee access to all social and educational services for children with disabilities. A Technical Commission for Inclusive Education has also been created in the territory.

In **Spain**, the appointment in 2018 of a High Commissioner against child poverty has increased the visibility of the problem and helped to identify the measures needed to address it.

The **European Commission** has set up the Pillar of Social Rights, which, among other things, makes social protection and inclusion a priority policy area. Among its 20 principles are quality education for all, gender equality, equal opportunities, healthcare, inclusion of people with disabilities, childcare and protection of children from poverty.

The **Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)** has carried out extensive research on child poverty across the EU member states, as compiled in the 2018 Child Poverty Report.⁶⁹ It has also created audio-visual materials on children’s perspectives of poverty.

Council of Europe standards and tools have also been relied upon to foster initiatives and **counter discrimination** against various groups of children, as the following table summarises:

Type of discrimination (by group of children or issue)	Survey respondents who said that CoE tools and standards had been used at some level in their country to help foster initiatives
Children with disabilities	22
Children in all forms of alternative care	24
Reducing the number of children in large-scale residential care facilities	22
Children on the move or otherwise affected by migration	19
Children from national minorities	18
Roma children	18

⁶⁹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2018), Combating child poverty: An issue of fundamental rights.

Gender equality between boys and girls	24
LGBTI children	13

While Council of Europe tools and standards have been used in many member states to foster initiatives which combat discrimination against children in alternative care and to promote gender equality, fewer initiatives had been taken for minority children (those in immigration, national minorities, Roma children) and relatively few initiatives (based on Council of Europe action) had been taken to counter discrimination against LGBTI children.

The civil society and international organisation survey respondents were more negative, on the whole: in particular, very few respondents felt that there had been any significant initiatives since 2016 to protect the rights of children with disabilities, national minority children, or LGBTI children. While most felt that significant initiatives had been taken in the area of migration, they largely drew on initiatives from non- or intergovernmental organisations, rather than at the state-level.

Highlights

In **Germany**, the “Welcome Programme” supports municipalities in the integration of refugee children and youth, through training of local authority staff and assistance in establishing local networks.

In **Hungary**, Sure Start Children’s Centres have been placed in disadvantaged areas with high Roma populations. There are currently 110 Centres which involve 2500 children and their families. The Homes provide educational support and access to services for families with young children.

Ireland launched the world’s first LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy in 2018. The three-year strategy is action-oriented and aims to ensure that all LGBTI+ young people are visible, valued and included in all walks of life.

Montenegro has adopted a “Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2016-2020”.

In the **Republic of Moldova**, the “Linguistic Training Programme for National Minorities of the Republic of Moldova” project is being implemented. The project provides activities, training and monitoring of use and study relating to the Romanian language.

Poland adopted the governmental programme for comprehensive family support “For Life” in December 2016. It supports families with disabled people, especially those raising children with disabilities. The programme aims to ensure full social integration of persons with disabilities and provide comprehensive support to their families, including their financial, psychological and housing needs.

Romania has adopted a Deinstitutionalisation Plan, while **Ukraine** has adopted a National Strategy for the Institutional Childcare System (2017-2026).

The **European Commission’s** Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme has funded a number of projects tackling gender stereotypes and roles addressed specifically to children, including “Boys in Care”, which encourages and empowers boys to pursue care-based occupations (**Germany**); “Gender Equality Charter Marks”, which develops wholesale gender equality ‘charter marks’ for the purpose of tackling gender stereotyping within education (**United Kingdom**); and “GENDERED”, which combats gender stereotypes in education and career guidance (**Cyprus**).

The **EU’s** European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) have been supporting a wide range of measures to prevent institutionalisation of children and support reforms. Meanwhile, the “**Opening Doors for Europe’s Children**” campaign released country factsheets in 2018 on the progress of deinstitutionalisation.

Overall, survey responses suggest that more children are enjoying their right to equal opportunities. On average, member states felt that the situation of children in their country regarding social rights and social inclusion had “improved”. Only two member states felt that the situation had “somewhat deteriorated”. It is to be noted, however, that civil society and international organisations were more conservative in their estimation of the state of affairs under this priority area. For them, the

majority felt that the situation had only "somewhat improved". Some noted that changes in legislation and policy at state-level had not necessarily led to better social or educational inclusion of children. Meanwhile, progress on deinstitutionalisation, for example, appeared complex to interpret: although it was felt that many member states have increased awareness of the need to find alternative arrangements for children with disabilities, others noted that unaccompanied children continued to be held in large residential institutions. In particular, there was concern that the continued effects of austerity were hampering improvement to children's social rights; particularly for vulnerable groups of children. Many of the children consulted said that they had experienced barriers and discrimination on grounds such as gender, race, sexuality, or disability and cited attitudes and prejudice as being a major issue.

Checklist: Key performance indicators

- ✓ There is evidence of impressive change in legislation and policy to improve the protection of children's social rights.

However, there has been variable success in member state use of Council of Europe standards and tools, with particularly low uptake for the Recommendation on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights.

- ✓ There is relatively significant evidence of initiatives to better protect children from discrimination.

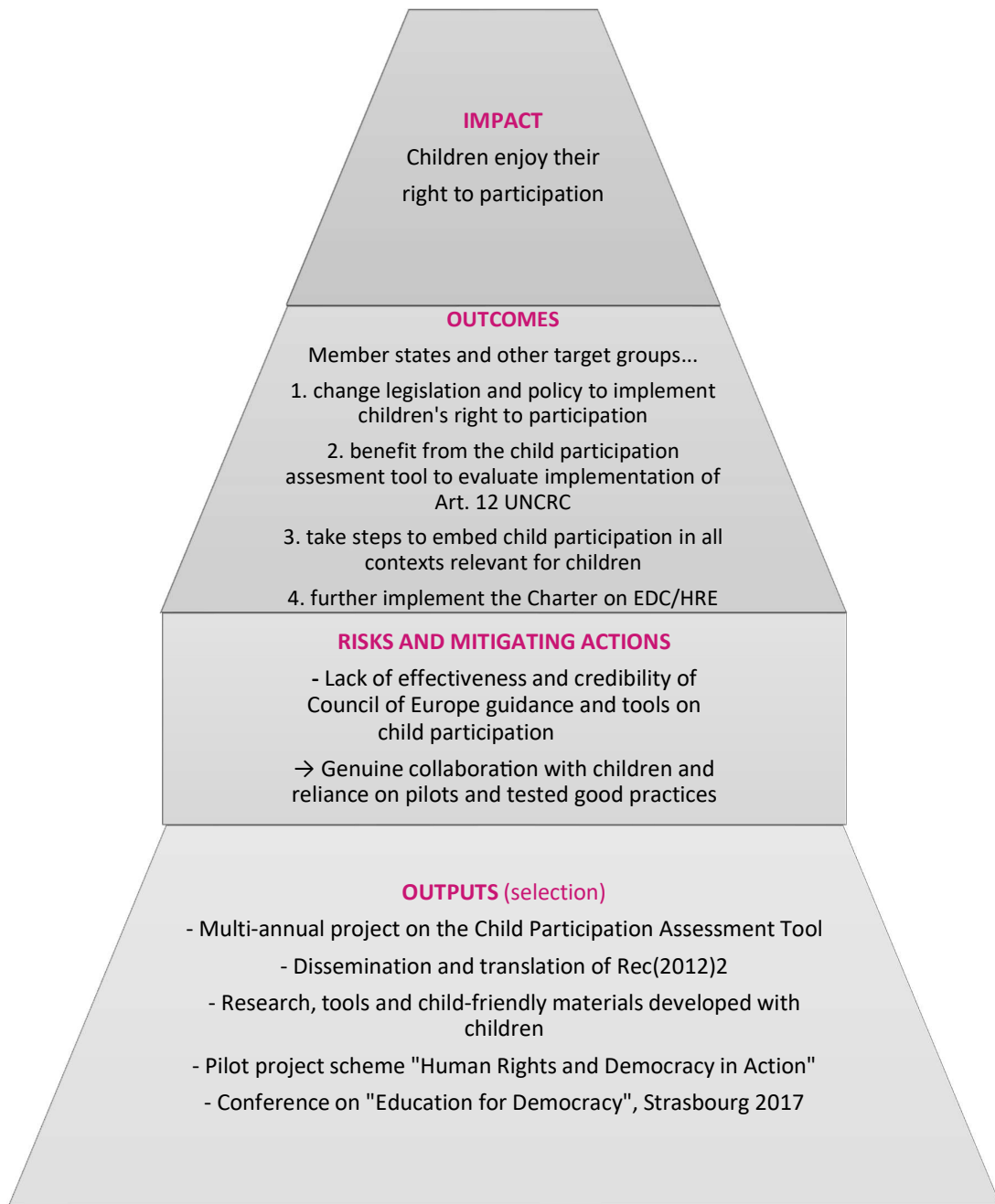
However, this varies according to the group of children or type of discrimination, with the most difficulty relating to LGBTI children.

- ✓ There is relatively good documented use by member states and other target groups using Council of Europe standards and tools to counter discrimination against children.

However, this varies according to the group of children or type of discrimination. In particular, despite considerable Council of Europe action relating to migrant children, there appears to be relatively less reliance upon this.

PRIORITY AREA 2: PARTICIPATION OF ALL CHILDREN

Strategy performance indicators



Key performance indicators:

1. Evidence of change in legislation, policy and practice to implement children's right to participation
2. Evidence of change in legislation and policy to implement the Charter on EDC/HRE
3. Documented use by member states and other target groups of Council of Europe standards and tools on child participation

The UN SDGs and participation of all children

SDG	Targets relevant to participation of all children	Relation to the CoE Strategy
4. Quality education	4.7 Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development	2.3 Strengthening participation in and through schools [40] Supporting the development of citizenship and human rights education.
5. Gender equality	5.5 Ensure women's [and girl's] full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	2.2 Reaching out to children [39] Giving special emphasis on participation of children in vulnerable situations.
10. Reduced inequalities	10.2 Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status	
11. Sustainable cities and communities	11.3 Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management	2.1 Promoting children's rights to participate [37] Children's right to be heard and participate in decisions affecting them, both as an individual as a group.
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	
17. Partnerships for the goals	17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships	

Children have the right to be heard and participate in decisions affecting them, both as individuals and as a group. This priority area of the Strategy focusses on promoting children's right to participate in all contexts relevant for children and strengthening participation in and through schools.

Outputs & mitigating action

Promoting children's rights to participate

Member states have been supported in embedding participation in practice in a systematic manner and in all contexts relevant for children. Based on the Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18,⁷⁰ the Council of Europe has supported two **annual work cycles of the Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT)**⁷¹ in six volunteer countries: Bulgaria, Italy and Latvia (2016-2017); Finland, Malta and Slovenia (2018-2019). The Council of Europe has also taken action to facilitate exchange of experiences on child participation, including through organisation of an evaluation seminar and capacity-building session in Sofia (2018) at the end of the second work cycle. The Child Participation Assessment Tool has been subject to ongoing assessment and consultation, including with children. Recommendation 2012(2) on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 has been translated and is currently available on the Council of Europe Children's Rights website in 9 languages.⁷²

More specifically, the Council of Europe has launched a Roma Youth Action Plan 2016-2020 which promotes the empowerment and participation in policy decision-making processes and structures at the European level for Roma youth.⁷³

The CPAT: Evaluation findings

The second working cycle of the CPAT was closed off with an evaluation meeting (5-8 July 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria). Full use of the CPAT took considerable time and resources, which underlined the importance of decision-makers driving the assessment process, and the need for further specification of the role and work of other stakeholders, including NGOs. It was recommended that a working group or steering committee be set up in implementing countries, to ensure collaboration and coordination between stakeholders. The evaluation process found that there were some gaps in data availability, with particular difficulties in ascertaining the situation of "seldom heard" children. It also highlighted the difficulty in concretising and comparing standards which use subjective terms, such as "child-friendly" and "effective".

Reaching out to children

The Council of Europe has continued to **involve children and give due respect to their views in its research and for the purpose of informing the development of its tools and standards.** A summary of its child consultation work on recent projects is provided in the table, below. These collaborative efforts with children lend effectiveness and credibility to the resultant Council of Europe tools and standards. Numerous child-friendly tools and publications have been produced as the result of these consultation processes. Monitoring bodies have encouraged the participation of children during monitoring visits, while the PACE's Sub-committee on Children has promoted child participation within the Assembly and beyond, through various initiatives.

As a **mitigating** action, the Children's Rights Division has developed a Child Safeguarding Policy, which is being implemented for all activities involving contact with children. A more comprehensive Policy is being prepared for the organisation as a whole.

⁷⁰ CM/Rec(2012)2.

⁷¹ Council of Europe (2016), Child Participation Assessment Tool: Indicators for measuring progress in promoting the right of children and young people under the age of 18 to participate in matters of concern to them.

⁷² Armenian, English, Estonian, French, German, Italian, Romanian, Russian, Turkish.

⁷³ See further <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/about-the-project>.

Consultation topic	Final product	Consultation details
Children's rights in the digital environment	Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment	<i>Report – It's our world: Children's views on how to protect their rights in the digital environment</i> ⁷⁴
Protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies	Second monitoring round report of the Lanzarote Committee	10 member states (Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Republic of Moldova, Portugal, Serbia, Ukraine)
Mid-term evaluation of the CoE Children's rights strategy	Mid-term evaluation report ⁷⁵	52 children 4 member states (Germany, Malta, Ukraine, United Kingdom)
Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT)	Preparation of individual reports from participating countries with possibility of a follow-up seminar in 2020	
Child-friendly information for children in migration	How to convey child-friendly information to children in migration: A handbook for frontline professionals. ⁷⁶	<i>Report – What do children think? Child-friendly information for children in migration</i> ⁷⁷ 87 children 5 member states (Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary)
Age-assessment procedures	- Policy guidelines on age assessment procedures - Child-friendly brochure on age assessment procedures	<i>Report – We are children, hear us out! Children speak out about age assessment</i> ⁷⁸ 52 children 9 member states (Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Portugal)
Engaging children in advocacy work	Training tool on engaging children in advocacy work on their right to participate in decision-making processes ⁷⁹	
Campaign materials on prejudice against Roma people	2 child-friendly Dosta! Campaign videos	70 children 3 member states (Albania, Hungary, Spain)
Experiences of children with disabilities in the digital environment	<i>Report – Children with disabilities in the digital environment</i>	97 children 6 member states (Belgium, Germany, Republic of Moldova, Portugal, Northern Ireland (UK), Turkey)

⁷⁴ Council of Europe (2017).

⁷⁵ A delegation of children from 10 member states will also take active part in the 2019 mid-term evaluation conference, "Redefining Power: Strengthening the rights of the child as the key to a future-proof Europe".

⁷⁶ Council of Europe (2018).

⁷⁷ Council of Europe (2018), Child-friendly information for children in migration: What do children think?

⁷⁸ Council of Europe (2019), We are children, hear us out! Children speak out about age assessment.

⁷⁹ Eurochild (2018).

Strengthening participation in and through schools

The Council of Europe has strengthened the opportunities for children’s participation in the school setting and the democratic governance of schools by supporting the development of citizenship and human rights education in its member states, within the framework of the implementation of the Charter for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.⁸⁰ A major conference, “Learning to Live Together”, took place under the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (June 2017) on the future of citizenship and human rights Education in Europe. Children’s participation within the review of the implementation of the Charter was facilitated through consultation with children and parent’s organisations.⁸¹

Implementation of the Charter: Findings of the Report “Learning to live together”⁸²

The report found that education was increasingly recognised across member states – and non-member states - as an essential response to the challenges faced by society. At the same time, however relevant policies needed to be supported more effectively, and co-operation between governments and civil society further developed. It also found inconsistencies between policies and their implementation; the need for greater awareness of the relevance of citizenship and human rights education; and a lack of criteria or processes to evaluate the effectiveness of such educational programmes. Member states felt that the Council of Europe could do more to take into account the specific needs and priorities of individual countries; to raise awareness of its child-friendly tools; and to further develop and promote the Charter.

Peer-to-peer learning among member states has been supported through the pilot projects scheme “Human Rights and Democracy in Action”, jointly funded by the European Union and Council of Europe. The multilateral-state project has resulted in the development of several publications and tools, including:

- ▶ A report on the lessons learned and results of the implementation of the whole community approach for social inclusion;⁸³
- ▶ A strategy and tools for teachers and teacher trainings on developing competences for democratic culture in the digital era;⁸⁴
- ▶ A training tool for school leaders/senior managers on handling controversial issues in and beyond the schools;⁸⁵
- ▶ A report on educational policies and practices to address and prevent violence in school.⁸⁶

Outcomes & impact

There have been positive outcomes at member state level for child participation. 34 member states said that they had changed legislation and policy to **implement children’s right to participation**. More than half of member states said that had used Council of Europe standards and tools, including the CPAT in this regard. Of these, 7 member states have recently been, or are currently involved in official assessment rounds using the tool since 2016 (Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia (2016/2017), Finland, Malta, Slovenia (2018/2019) Armenia (2019/2020)). Since 2016, 13 member states⁸⁷ have

⁸⁰ CM/Rec(2010)7.

⁸¹ Council of Europe (2017), Learning to live together: Council of Europe report on the state of citizenship and human rights education in Europe.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Council of Europe 2017), Democratic school governance for inclusion: A whole community approach.

⁸⁴ Council of Europe (2017), Strategy Paper: Developing competences for democratic culture in the digital era: Strategy paper.

⁸⁵ Council of Europe (2017), Managing controversy: Developing a strategy for handling controversy and teaching controversial issues in schools.

⁸⁶ Council of Europe (2017), Addressing violence in schools through education for democratic citizenship and human rights education.

⁸⁷ Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, San Marino, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine.

ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communication procedure. Ireland and Lithuania are currently undertaking concrete steps towards ratification.

Other stakeholders have enhanced their efforts to reach out to children and to promote child participation within their work, in line with Council of Europe and UNCRC standards, and including through collaboration with the Council of Europe. Armenia’s implementation of the child participation assessment tool, for example, is being supported by UNICEF Armenia and Save the Children.

Highlights

Armenia’s Human Rights Defender’s Ombudsman has developed a website in partnership with **UNICEF** and **Kaspersky Laboratories** which is dedicated to children. Children can use it to submit complaints to the Ombudsman, and to get advice from the Ombuds staff.

Azerbaijan has held its 4th and 5th countrywide Child Forum on the occasion of “International Children’s Day”. On each occasion, more than 600 children participated across the country. Children from Bulgaria and Turkey also participated in the Forum.

Ireland has continued to implement its National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making (2015-2020) – the first Strategy in Europe dedicated to child participation.

In **Germany**, the Coordination Office for Children’s Rights of the German Children’s Fund started its work in 2017. It uses the indicators of the Child Participation Assessment Tool to create projects or commission studies that contribute to analysis of the implementation of children’s right to participation.

During its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, **Romania** made child participation and involvement at the European level a key priority. It carried out a number of initiatives in this context, including consultation with hundreds of Romanian children on the European Union and related topics (together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the **Bacau School Inspectorate** and **UNICEF Romania**).

In **Switzerland**, the engage.ch project, which has been developed and tested in pilot regions, provides an online platform for children to share their concerns and political questions. Their contributions are sent to local youth parliaments who review them and handle their implementation. Municipalities can also consider contributions made through the platform. Switzerland has also been undertaking a pilot project on child participation in the reporting cycle of the CRC.

Eurochild adopted a **Child Participation Strategy** in 2017 with the aim of embedding children’s participation within its working structures; including advocacy work, strategic planning and organising events.

Steps have been taken by policymakers and other stakeholders in member states to **embed child participation in all contexts** relevant for children, as the following table of survey responses outlines:

Context	Member state survey respondents who said that steps had been taken in their country to embed child participation within the context
Education	22
Justice	20
Healthcare	18
Social services	18
Sports, culture, leisure	17
Family policies	16

Given the Strategy's focus upon improving participation in and through schools, it is particularly positive to see high rates of action within the context of education. A reported high number of member states taking action in the context of justice is also to be welcomed, in light of the Strategy area four priority of promoting child-friendly justice.

16 member states responding to the survey said that action had been taken to further implement the Charter for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. While many of the children consulted said that they knew a little about human rights, however, most said that either they, or other children, could know more about them. This suggests that even further efforts are required in this area; particularly in raising awareness of children's rights as they apply to the five priority areas of the Strategy.

Highlights

Since 2016, **Andorra** has integrated the competences for democratic citizenship education within the national curriculum, focussing particularly on cross-curricular competencies.

In **Bulgaria**, a new law on pre-school and school education entered into force in 2016. It encourages child participation in and through school by providing for student self-regulation and children's active participation in school life.

Denmark launched a "Children's Rights Package" in 2017, which aims to strengthen children's involvement within their own social cases, by providing support and training to social workers, as well as consultation with children involved in social services.

In **Serbia**, the Institute for the Advancement of Education prepared a new curriculum for primary schools in 2017, which is oriented to responsible participation in democratic society and the observance of human rights and freedoms. They have also implemented the joint FRA-Council of Europe project "Fostering a democratic school culture", which involved 20 pilot schools across Serbia. Through reliance on the Model of Competences for Democratic Culture,⁸⁸ teams from the pilot schools developed good practices and piloted them through curricular and extra-curricular activities, including within the wider local community. The Reference Framework 20 competences were also used as a basis for various activities organised by the schools.

In **Sweden**, the joint EU-Council of Europe training pack on teaching controversial issues through education for democratic citizenship and human rights⁸⁹ has been piloted in national schools. The Swedish curricula have also been based upon the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.

In **Turkey**, children in 81 Provinces have engaged in peer education on children's rights. This was accompanied by the dissemination of 12,500 "Child Participation Manuals".

The **UNHCR** has partnered with several countries (**Bulgaria, Italy, France**) to enhance child participation in asylum procedures, through the production of child-friendly information in the form of leaflets, animated videos and interactive games.

Overall, survey responses suggest that many more children are enjoying their right to participation. All respondents to the member state survey felt that the situation had improved to varying extents. On average, member states felt that the effectiveness of children's right to participation in their country had "improved". Civil society and other stakeholders including Ombudspersons, regional and international organisations, were more conservative in their estimation of improvements, with the vast majority stating that the situation had "somewhat improved". Only one respondent felt that the situation had "somewhat deteriorated". Many respondents felt that there had been much awareness-raising and discourse on taking child-participation to the next level: although not everyone felt that this was fully reflected by implementation in practice. The children consulted felt that they had the most

⁸⁸ Council of Europe (2016), Competences for democratic culture: Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies.

⁸⁹ European Union and Council of Europe (Reprint 2016), Living with controversy: Teaching controversial issues through education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE).

opportunities to participate in the school context, although there were very limited options in other contexts. Notably, children felt that much more progress needed to be made in ensuring that adults take them, and their right to participate, seriously.

Checklist: Key performance indicators

- ✓ There is evidence of change in legislation, policy and practice to implement children's right to participation

However, there has been variable success in specific contexts, with comparatively less action to embed child participation within family policies, as well as sports, culture and leisure.

- ✓ There is evidence of significant change in legislation and policy to implement the Charter on EDC/HRE

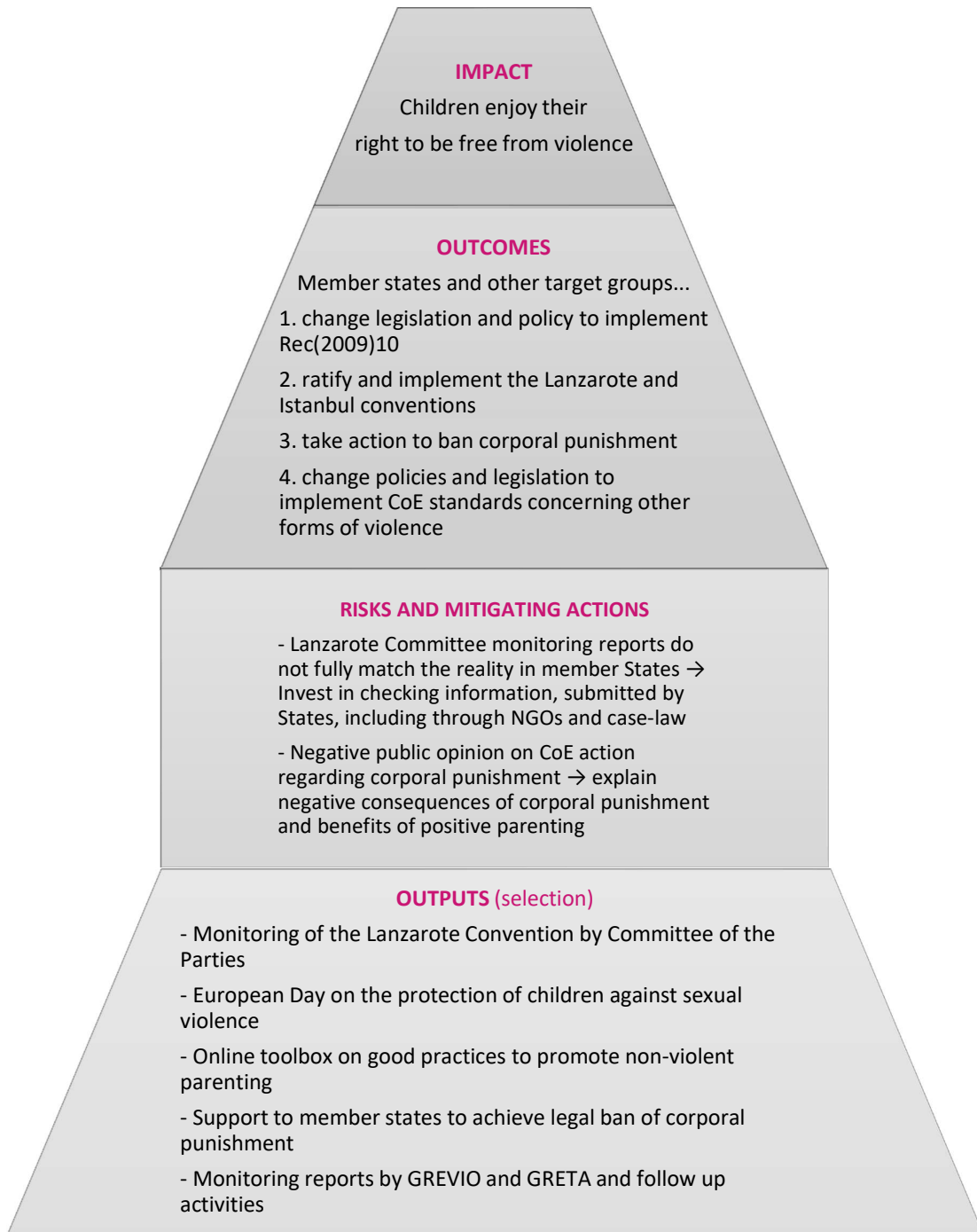
However, children are calling for greater education on and awareness-raising of human rights.

- ✓ There is relatively good documented use by member states and other target groups of Council of Europe standards and tools on child participation

However, many member states are vague in elucidating precisely what, or how, tools and standards are used; relatively few appear to have carried out a systematic assessment of child participation.

PRIORITY AREA 3: A LIFE FREE FROM VIOLENCE FOR ALL CHILDREN

Strategy performance indicators



Key performance indicators:

1. Evidence of change of legislation and policy to improve children's protection from all forms of violence in line with Council of Europe standards
2. Number of ratifications of Lanzarote and Istanbul conventions
3. Documented use by member states and other target groups of Council of Europe standards and tools on protection of children from violence

The UN SDGs and a life free from violence for all children

SDG	Targets relevant to a life free from violence for all children	Relation to the CoE Strategy
4. Quality education	4.7 Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence	3.4 Protecting children from violence in various settings and forms [48] Addressing violence in schools, strengthening the role of education
	4.A Build and upgrade education facilities and provide safe, nonviolent learning environments for all	
5. Gender equality	5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	3.4 Protecting children from violence in various settings and forms [49] Protecting girls from gender-based violence
	5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	
8. Decent work and economic growth	8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour	3.4 Protecting children from violence in various settings and forms [50] Protecting children from trafficking and related violence
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere	3.1 Promoting an integrated approach to protection from violence [43] Development of solid legal, policy and institutional frameworks 3.2 Combating sexual exploitation and abuse 3.3 Eliminating corporal punishment 3.4 Protecting children from violence in various settings and forms
	16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	
	16.A Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels to prevent violence	
17. Partnerships for the goals	17.18 Enhance capacity building to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data	3.1 Promoting an integrated approach to protection from violence [43] Promoting development of a national research agenda to prevent, address and respond to violence against children

Children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse and exploitation. This priority area of the Strategy focusses on promoting an integrated approach to protection from violence, combating sexual exploitation and abuse, eliminating corporal punishment, and protecting children from violence in various settings and forms.

Outputs & mitigating action

Promoting an integrated approach to protection from violence

The Council of Europe has continued its work to promote an integrated and strategic approach to addressing violence against children. The Strategy sets out the Council of Europe’s aim to contribute to the elimination of **all forms** of violence **in all settings**. Violence against children has been addressed in a number of key policy areas: education, media, justice, equality, family, migration, alternative care, as well as for children with disabilities. The following table highlights action taken so far in these fields:

Field	Action taken?	Example of specific output(s)
Education	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outputs from the “Human Rights and Democracy in Action” pilot projects scheme - Free to Speak – Safe to Learn campaign - Dissemination of the video clip “Beat Bullying” - Translation, dissemination and promotion of the manual “Addressing violence in schools”
Media ⁹⁰	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No Hate Speech Movement - Free to Speak – Safe to Learn campaign - Publication – Media regulatory authorities and hate speech (2017) - Conference – Addressing hate speech in the media (2018, Zagreb)
Justice	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued promotion of the Guidelines on Child-Friendly Justice - GRETA monitoring round on access to justice and remedies for victims of trafficking in human beings - Country projects/initiatives in Slovenia and Ukraine on Barnahus/Children’s Houses
Equality	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PACE Resolution 2159(2017) on Protecting refugee women and girls from gender-based violence - Factsheet on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls (2019) - No Hate Speech Movement - Free to Speak – Safe to Learn Campaign

⁹⁰ Action taken in relation to violence facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) is considered under the fifth priority action area: rights of the child in the digital environment.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GREVIO leaflet on the Istanbul Convention and children’s rights - Committee of Ministers Declaration on the need to intensify the effort to prevent and combat FGM and forced marriages in Europe. - Guide on good and promising practices aimed at combating and preventing FGM and forced marriage (2017) - Report Safe at school: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics in Europe (2018)
Family	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing and updating the repository of good practices promoting non-violent parenting - GREVIO leaflet on the Istanbul Convention and children’s rights
Migration	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PACE Resolution 2295(2019) to Stop violence against, and exploitation of, migrant children - GRETA thematic monitoring chapter on children and trafficking and in all country reports of the 2nd evaluation round - GRETA urgent monitoring report on victims of trafficking among unaccompanied children - Special reports of the Lanzarote Committee on children affected by the refugee crisis and at transit zones at the Hungarian/Serbian border
Alternative care	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lanzarote Committee Declaration on protecting children in out-of-home care from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse - Promotion and dissemination of the handbook on Securing Children’s Rights: A guide for professionals working in alternative care and a child-friendly brochure - Technical assistance to assess existing legislation for responding to child abuse cases in alternative care institutions (Ukraine)
Children with disabilities	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council of Europe Disability Strategy (2017-2023) chapter on violence

The Council of Europe has supported member states in implementing the **Committee of Ministers Recommendation on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence**.⁹¹ A **Clearinghouse** platform on responses to violence against children⁹² has been launched, which provides access to existing national strategies in the field and a platform for peer-to-peer support in their development, implementation and review at national, regional and local levels. Specific tools were developed to establish an enabling environment for operating “Barnahus” (Children’s Houses) through country projects. Notably, the Council of Europe produced a member state survey and report

⁹¹ CM/Rec(2009)10.

⁹² See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/clearinghouse-on-responses-to-violence-against-children>.

on the progress made by member states towards eliminating all forms of violence against children, with focus on implementation of the Recommendation on integrated national strategies.⁹³

The Council of Europe has provided technical assistance and support to member states in the development of integrated responses to violence against children through a number of projects and initiatives, including:

- ▶ **Ukraine:** project on “Combating violence against women and children in Ukraine” (2017-2018)⁹⁴
- ▶ **Georgia:** Technical expert advice on the Georgian draft Child Rights Code and the draft Human Rights National Action Plan of the Government of Georgia (2018-2019).

Supporting the 2030 Agenda: The PACE resolution on Ending violence against children: a Council of Europe contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals⁹⁵ recognises Target 16.2 to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children as “one of the most important goals of all” and “one of the top targets for which the contribution of the Council of Europe (...) will prove most valuable”. It calls on member states to ensure structures are effectively in place to tackle violence against children, including a national action plan on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and an integrated national strategy on addressing violence against children. The Council of Europe survey and report on violence against children also focusses on member state progress in achieving Target 16.2. An information note maps out the Council of Europe’s contribution to the UN SDGs through its action on ending violence against children.⁹⁶

Combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

Work has continued to promote, monitor and support the implementation of the Council of Europe treaties aimed at preventing and addressing the various forms of sexual violence against children. In particular, effort has been aimed at the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (Lanzarote Convention)⁹⁷ by all member states.

The Lanzarote Committee has continued to monitor implementation of the Lanzarote Convention: the second implementation report on the protection of children against sexual abuse in the circle of trust was adopted in 2018.⁹⁸ The Committee has published two special reports⁹⁹ and a declaration on protecting migrant and refugee children against sexual exploitation and abuse.¹⁰⁰ In October 2019, it adopted a declaration on protecting children in out-of-home care from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.¹⁰¹ The second monitoring round on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) is nearing completion, with an implementation report planned for 2020. The second monitoring round is supported by a number of documents which clarify the applicability of the Lanzarote Convention to sexual offences facilitated through ICTs, including an interpretative opinion on the matter,¹⁰² an opinion on sexual

⁹³ Council of Europe (2019), Report on the third priority area of the Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2016-2021): “A life free from violence for all children”. Some of the main findings are discussed in this report.

⁹⁴ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/ukraine>.

⁹⁵ Resolution 2294(2019).

⁹⁶ Council of Europe, Ending all forms of violence against children by 2030: The Council of Europe’s contribution to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

⁹⁷ CETS No.201. See also the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, CETS No.201 and the Council of Europe Convention on Against trafficking in human beings, CETS No.197.

⁹⁸ Lanzarote Committee (2018), 2nd Implementation Report: Protection of children against sexual abuse in the circle of trust – the strategies.

⁹⁹ Lanzarote Committee (2017), Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse; Lanzarote Committee Special Report further to a visit of a delegation of the Lanzarote Committee to transit zones at the Serbian/Hungarian border (5-7 July 2017), 30 January 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Lanzarote Committee Declaration on protecting migrant and refugee children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (adopted 28 June 2018).

¹⁰¹ Adopted at its 25th meeting (15-18 October 2019).

¹⁰² Lanzarote Committee Interpretative Opinion on the applicability of the Lanzarote Convention to sexual offences against children facilitated through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (adopted 12 May 2017).

images generated, shared and received by children¹⁰³ and a declaration on web addresses advertising child sexual abuse material, images or other offences.¹⁰⁴

Sexual violence in the circle of trust: Findings of the Lanzarote Committee

The second implementation report on protecting children against sexual abuse in the circle of trust focussed on member states' strategies. It found that more could be done to involve children and representatives of civil society in preventing sexual abuse of children and assisting victims; and to strengthen collaboration with the private sector (particularly the information and communication technology sector). It found that not enough was being done to regularly raise children's awareness on the fact that sexual abuse may also happen within the family or through manipulation of children's trust by persons close to them. It underlined the importance of sexuality education at school for this purpose, and of further involving parents and care-givers in awareness-raising initiatives. Regular training and screening for those working with children could be strengthened, and caution should be taken in order to ensure that confidentiality rules do not constitute obstacles to professionals reporting suspected cases of abuse. There were also shortcomings in effective intervention programmes or measures to assist those who have, or who fear that they might, commit sexual offences against children.

To address concerns regarding the accuracy and comprehensiveness of monitoring reports, which are based primarily on governmental submissions, the Committee has invested in checking information submitted by states, including through NGOs and other stakeholders. A revision of its rules of procedure¹⁰⁵ has strengthened NGO participation in monitoring rounds. It has also produced guidelines for implementation of child participation by states and other stakeholders to contribute children's views to the second monitoring round.¹⁰⁶

The Committee has also continued its role as a platform for capacity building and collection of good practices: including through the organisation of numerous events and conferences.¹⁰⁷ In addition, an international conference "Strengthening civil society participation in the implementation and monitoring of the Lanzarote Convention" took place in Strasbourg, April 2019. Representatives from over 35 civil society organisations active in 20 member states took part in the conference.¹⁰⁸

Three annual European Days on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse have been celebrated on 18 November since 2016. The days have been dedicated to raising awareness, sharing good practices and promoting ratification. Since 2017, the European Days have been themed (the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs (2017); the protection of children against sexual abuse in sport (2018)). The 2019 edition is themed "empowering children to stop sexual violence".¹⁰⁹ The Parliamentary Assembly has continued activities in this field through the PACE Network of Contact Parliamentarians to stop sexual violence against children and has contributed to each European Day through a number of awareness-raising and promotional initiatives.

The Council of Europe has provided support to member states in tackling sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children through a number of initiatives and projects, including:

¹⁰³ Lanzarote Committee Opinion on child sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos generated, shared and received by children (adopted 6 June 2019).

¹⁰⁴ Lanzarote Committee Declaration on web addresses advertising or promoting child sexual abuse material or images or any other offences established in accordance with the Lanzarote Convention (adopted 16 June 2016).

¹⁰⁵ Lanzarote Committee Rules of Procedure revised by the Committee at its 14th meeting (15-17 March 2016).

¹⁰⁶ See further <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/child-participation>.

¹⁰⁷ See [https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/good-practices#{%2212443521%22:\[\]}](https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/good-practices#{%2212443521%22:[]}).

¹⁰⁸ See Council of Europe Conference Report on Strengthening civil society participation in the implementation and monitoring of the Lanzarote Convention, July 2019.

¹⁰⁹ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/2019-edition>.

- ▶ **Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine** (focus countries): End Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse @ Europe (2018-2020)¹¹⁰ (supported by the Fund to End Violence against Children)
- ▶ **Armenia**: Legal expert opinion on Armenian legislation with regard to the obligations under the Lanzarote Convention (2019)
- ▶ **Georgia**: Project on "Responding to child sexual exploitation and abuse in Georgia, Phase I" (2017-2019)¹¹¹
- ▶ **Republic of Moldova**: Project on "Protecting children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in Moldova" (2018-2020)¹¹²
- ▶ **Slovenia**: joint EU-Council of Europe project on "Barnahus/Children's House" in Slovenia (Phase I: 2018, Phase II 2019-2021)¹¹³
- ▶ **Ukraine**: Feasibility assessment of piloting Barnahus in Ukraine (2017-2018).

Sexual violence against children in sports has been addressed through a number of initiatives, discussed below.

Eliminating corporal punishment

The Council of Europe has continued to promote the effective elimination of corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment of children in all settings, including within the home. In particular, it has promoted non-violent discipline and positive upbringing, in line with the Recommendation on policy to support positive parenting,¹¹⁴ through the development of a repository of good practices and tools promoting non-violent parenting.¹¹⁵ The repository currently contains 56 practices from 13 member states.¹¹⁶

To address the need to change social norms that condone or tolerate corporal punishment, the Council of Europe continues to promote its campaign and educational material, particularly those relating to the successful "Raise your hand against smacking!" campaign. The material is available in 19 languages¹¹⁷ and remains accessible through the Children's Rights webpage.¹¹⁸

Protecting children from violence in various settings and forms

The Council of Europe has continued to address the issue of violence in schools. In particular, action has been carried out on the basis of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Citizenship and Human Rights Education, including products resulting from the "Human Rights and Democracy in Action" pilot projects scheme.¹¹⁹ A three-volume Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture was completed in 2018, which is adapted for use in primary and secondary schools, as well as national curricula and teaching programmes.¹²⁰ The Council of Europe has supported awareness-raising actions and campaigns on democratic citizenship and human rights education, notably through the "Free to Speak – Safe to Learn: Democratic Schools for all" campaign.¹²¹ The campaign aims to raise awareness, collect and showcase good practices, and provide tools to support schools to implement human rights and democratic citizenship education.

¹¹⁰ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/endocsea-europe>.

¹¹¹ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/georgia>.

¹¹² See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/republic-of-moldova>.

¹¹³ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/slovenia>.

¹¹⁴ CM/Rec(2006)19.

¹¹⁵ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/repository-of-good-practices>.

¹¹⁶ Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Malta, Norway, Romania, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (Northern Ireland).

¹¹⁷ Armenian, Croatian, English, Estonian, French, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Spanish, Turkish.

¹¹⁸ See [https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/corporal-punishment#{%2212441097%22:\[4\]}](https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/corporal-punishment#{%2212441097%22:[4]}).

¹¹⁹ See further "Priority area 2: Participation of all children – Outputs & mitigating action".

¹²⁰ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture>.

¹²¹ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn>.

Pursuing a transversal approach, the Strategy aims to strengthen the role of education in preventing specific forms of violence, such as bullying, including in schools, homophobic bullying and cyber-bullying, as well as violence linked to radicalisation. The following table provides a sample of relevant measures:

Specific form of violence	Action to strengthen the role of education in prevention
Bullying in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication – Bullying: Perspectives, practice and insights (2017) - Publication – Addressing violence in schools (2016) - Resources platform on preventing violence and bullying (Free to Speak – Safe to Learn) - Training of 21 pilot schools on anti-bullying (2019)
Homophobic bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication – Safe at school: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics in Europe (2018) - Resources platform on tackling discrimination (Free to Speak – Safe to Learn) - No Hate Speech Movement
Cyber-bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No Hate Speech Movement - Publication – Digital Citizenship Handbook (2019) - Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)2 on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries
Violence linked to radicalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PACE Resolution 2103(2016) on Preventing the radicalisation of children and young people by fighting the root causes - Reference framework of competences for democratic culture Volume 3 (2018), Chapter 6 building resilience to radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism - Publication – Students as suspects? The challenges of counter-radicalisation policies in education in the Council of Europe member states (2017)

Member states have been encouraged to sign ratify and effectively implement **the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)**.¹²² In particular, GREVIO adopted its first monitoring round on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention in 2016. Country monitoring reports have been adopted for 9 member states,¹²³ and 8 further member states have submitted reports as part of an ongoing evaluation.¹²⁴ To highlight the applicability of the Istanbul Convention to child victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence against girls, GREVIO published a leaflet in 2019.¹²⁵ The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) carried out an analysis of the legal situation on combating and preventing FGM and forced marriage, published in 2016.¹²⁶

¹²² CETS No.210.

¹²³ Albania, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Monaco, Montenegro, Portugal, Sweden, Turkey.

¹²⁴ See further <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/country-monitoring-work>.

¹²⁵ Council of Europe (2019), Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention): Children's Rights.

¹²⁶ CDDH, Analysis of the legal situation at international level and in Council of Europe member States on combating and preventing female genital mutilation and forced marriage (adopted 15-17 June 2016).

FGM and forced marriage: Findings of the CDDH

The CDDH's 2016 analysis concluded that a comprehensive approach, including integrated policies, was most effective in tackling these issues, with emphasis on preventive measures. Although the majority of reporting states criminalise FGM and forced marriage, the exact form of criminal provision varied. Particular challenges were identified, including a lack of data, in particular comparable data, on both issues and a lack of mechanisms for early identification of at-risk individuals. It called for wider efforts to promote a shift in behaviour and attitude, both of the public at large, and those who engage in these practices, as well as the need to empower women and girls and educate children and parents thereon. There was a lack of special procedures for regaining residency status for migrant victims who had left and then not returned to the host state, where they had been forced to marry.

The Council of Europe has supported member states in fulfilling their obligations under **the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings**, particularly through GRETA. GRETA has published urgent country monitoring reports on victims of trafficking among unaccompanied children,¹²⁷ a thematic monitoring and activity report chapter on trafficking in children covering 2016¹²⁸ and a general monitoring and activity report focusing on, inter alia, human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation.¹²⁹ Its third monitoring round is on access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking in human beings.

Trafficking in children: Findings of GRETA

Between 2012 and 2015, 4361 children were identified as victims of human trafficking in 12 States Parties: on average, they represented a quarter of all identified victims. Children are being trafficked transnationally and internationally, for various forms of exploitation. GRETA has stressed the need to mainstream awareness of child trafficking and exploitation across all relevant sectors, including in schools. A link between a rising number of unaccompanied or separated children arriving in States Parties and trafficking risks was identified. Although some improvements had been made in procedures for identifying child victims of trafficking, important gaps remain, and should be addressed through training and tools for relevant staff. GRETA also found shortcomings in the timely appointment of a legal guardian for the protection and rehabilitation of unaccompanied children identified as victims, in age-assessment procedures and in the provision of specialised shelters for child victims of trafficking. It found that repatriation of child victims of trafficking did not always take into account the best interests of the child. Improvements were identified in the protection of children before, during and after judicial proceedings, and in ensuring victims of trafficking are not punished – although this was not always applied in practice. It also stressed that child anti-trafficking policies should be integrated into national strategies and action plans for combating violence against children.

EPAS has continued to promote a **healthy and safe sports environment for children**. The project Pro Safe Sport (PSS)¹³⁰ has been followed by a new EU-Council of Europe joint initiative, Pro Safe Sport + (PSS+), which focusses on sexual violence against children in sport. Through this initiative, the campaign "Start to Talk"¹³¹ has been launched, which calls on governments, sports clubs, associations and federations as well as athletes and coaches to pledge to take concrete measures to respond to abuse. A number of audio-visual products, a training kit, an online resource centre and an expert network are being used both by public authorities and those in sports institutions to prevent and respond to sexual violence in sport. The campaign has attracted much interest in Europe (active in 21 member states) and beyond (in Australia, Canada (Quebec), Uruguay and Chile). FIFA, UEFA and the

¹²⁷ For Italy and Hungary.

¹²⁸ GRETA (2018).

¹²⁹ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/general-reports>.

¹³⁰ See <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/pss>.

¹³¹ Available through the Council of Europe Human Rights Channel, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-channel>.

International Olympic Committee are among the sports organisations supporting the campaign.¹³² Monitoring work has also been carried out by the EPAS in the implementation of the Recommendation on the protection of child and young athletes from dangers associated with migration.¹³³

Outcomes & impact

There is evidence of positive outcomes at member state level for children’s right to a life free from violence. Since 2016, 27 member states have put in place a national programme, action plan or strategy, or have introduced policy initiatives to improve **integrated measures on violence against children.** The VAC Report found that approximately two-thirds of member states have developed an integrated strategy on violence against children, since the adoption of the Policy Guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence. The below table highlights some examples of integrated strategies (or other measures) on the protection of violence against children. The VAC Report makes clear, however, that not all member state responses to violence against children fully align with the essential elements and principles laid out in the Policy Guidelines (for example, in relation to dedicated specific resources, data collection, or mandatory reporting mechanisms).

Member state	National strategy (or integrated measures)
Albania	National Agenda for the Rights of the Child (2017-2020)
Belgium	Three-year Plan to Prevent Abuse (2018-2020) (Wallonia-Brussels Federation)
Bulgaria	National Programme for Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children (2017-2020)
Finland	National Action Plan for Safety Promotion among Children and Youth – Target and Action Plan (2018-2025)
France	Inter-ministerial Plan for Mobilising and Combating Violence against Children (2017-2019)
Georgia	Human Rights Action Plan (2018-2020) (chapter on violence against children)
Iceland	National Action Plan Against Violence (2019-2022); National Action Plan on Child Protection (2019-2022)
Moldova	Implementation Plan of Actions (2016-2020) for the Strategy on Child Protection (2014-2020)
Montenegro	Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children Against Violence, Action Plan (2017-2021)
Netherlands	Violence Does Not Belong Anywhere: Programme for Tackling Domestic Violence and Child Abuse (2018-2021)
North Macedonia	Establishment of a National Coordination Body for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect
Romania	Operational Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy
Serbia	Action Plan of the Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence (2018-2022)

¹³² See <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/pss/training-kit>.

¹³³ CM/Rec(2012)10.

Slovak Republic	Reviewed (2017) National Strategy on the Protection of Children against Violence (2014-ongoing)
Scotland (United Kingdom)	National Policy on Protecting Scotland's Children and Young People (2018)

There have been significant steps forward in **ensuring that all member states ratify relevant Council of Europe Conventions**. Five further member states have ratified the Lanzarote Convention, with the remaining three taking concrete steps to enhance its ratification process.¹³⁴ Tunisia has also acceded to the Convention as a non-member state. 15 further member states have ratified the Istanbul Convention, bringing the current total to 34. Meanwhile, approximately half the member states said that they had taken action since 2016 to **further implementation** of the Lanzarote Convention and Istanbul Convention, through the adoption of new laws, dedicated strategies and action plans and the development of tools (including telephone or online helplines). There has been investment in relevant support services and initiatives have been carried out to improve the coordination of services and bodies involved in combating sexual violence.

Highlights

In 2018, **Belgium** added an Addendum to its National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking 2015-2019, which is dedicated to preventing and protecting child victims of trafficking.

In **Germany**, a Federal cooperation concept on "Protection and help in cases of trafficking in and exploitation of children" has been developed between the Ministry for Family Affairs, **ECPAT Germany** and the **German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings (KOK)**. The concept aims to further cross-sector cooperation between all actors involved in preventing and protecting child victims of human trafficking.

In **Montenegro**, a shelter for child victims of domestic violence and an SOS national children's telephone line have been established within the Bijela-based children's home "Youth".

Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) has produced a child-friendly version of its Strategy on Domestic and Sexual Violence, which covers child sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Norway has adopted an Action Plan against Negative Social Control, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (2017-2020). It focusses on strengthening legal protection for vulnerable persons, including children; strengthening support for those who are forced to break ties with their families or support networks; raising awareness and changing attitudes and practices within affected communities.

In **Sweden**, the number of "Barnahus/Children's Houses" in operation has risen from 6 in 2006 to over 30 today. The Children's Houses create a hub for the provision of interdisciplinary services in cases where there is suspicion of violence or sexual abuse against children. Police, prosecutors, social services, health and medical care services all collaborate on one common premise during the investigation of such cases. A number of other member states, including **Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania, Greece** and **Slovenia** have recently established or committed to creating Children's Houses or an equivalent.

In **Switzerland**, a mandatory, life-time ban on working with children came into force in January 2019, for those who have been convicted of offences relating to child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

Action has been taken to **ban corporal punishment**. Five further member states have prohibited corporal punishment in all settings,¹³⁵ bringing the current total to 34.

¹³⁴ Republic of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ireland.

¹³⁵ France, Georgia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Slovenia. Scotland (UK) passed a law to ban corporal punishment in all settings in October 2019.

Highlights

In 2016, **Austria** organised the High-Level Global Conference “Towards Childhoods free from Corporal Punishment”, during which a Resolution was adopted by ministers and state secretaries from 37 countries.

France, Malta, the Republic of Moldova and **Norway** have adopted national strategies or policies to support positive parenting.

The **Council of Baltic Sea States** has created a series of six “Non-Violent Childhoods Reports”, which offer good practices, standards and practical tools aimed at promoting non-violent childhoods. It has also created a child-friendly comic strip about the harmful impact of corporal punishment, which is currently available in 12 languages.¹³⁶

The **Global Initiative to End all Forms of Corporal Punishment** has continued its country monitoring work on progress towards complete prohibition, including within all Council of Europe member states.

Policies and legislation have also been changed to implement Council of Europe standards concerning **other forms of violence**; the VAC Report found that greatest progress has been seen, over the past decade, in the domestic setting and the school environment. This was supported by some of the respondents from other stakeholders, who praised awareness-raising and educational initiatives against violence. However, children living in institutions have not benefited from the same level of attention. Moreover, certain efforts, including campaign and awareness-raising measures, often appeared not to be adapted to specific groups of children, including children with disabilities or those living in institutions.

Highlights

Cyprus is conducting a national survey on school violence with a special focus on gender, and a system is being built for collecting data on school violence at local and national level. National priorities are also being set for research that can supplement the data collection system.

In **Italy**, a new law was passed in 2017 on cyber-bullying. The Ministry of Education has been preparing guidelines for the prevention of and tackling cyber-bullying, which focusses on training school staff and promoting an active role for students.

In the **Republic of Moldova**, the instructions on Intersectoral Cooperation Mechanism for the Identification, Evaluation, Referral, Assistance and Monitoring of Child Victims and Potential Victims of Violence or Neglect provide sectoral procedures on the prevention and reporting of violence against children who are placed in different institutions.

Overall, the VAC Report found that the majority of member states currently have significant measures in place, both at the legislative and at policy level, to protect children from violence. A “true understanding appears to have developed regarding the need to have a multi-stakeholder approach and an intersectoral cooperation in place to be able to provide children with adequate protection from violence and responses when it occurs”.¹³⁷

More children appear to be enjoying their right to be free from violence. On average, civil society respondents felt that the effectiveness of children’s right to a life free from violence in the European region had “somewhat improved”, with none stating that it had worsened. However, while much of this was attributed to action at the European and national level, some felt that external factors, such as the ease in irregular migration flows across Europe, had contributed to this. Moreover, with

¹³⁶ Arabic, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Icelandic, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Spanish.

¹³⁷ Council of Europe (2019), Report on the third priority area of the Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2016-2021): “A life free from violence for all children”, Executive Summary.

children continuing to fall victim to violence in Europe, the VAC Report makes clear that the battle is yet to be won. This is supported by the views of children and the results of the Council of Europe monitoring bodies. In spite of the laudable efforts to tackle violence in schools, the children consulted said that they felt most concerned about violence in the school context, with bullying being a major problem. They also felt said that violence happened in public places and online. There was widespread acknowledgment that vulnerable groups of children are more susceptible to violence than others.

Checklist: Key performance indicators

- ✓ There is evidence of change in legislation and policy to improve children's protection from all forms of violence in line with Council of Europe standards.

However, this varies according to the type or setting of violence. In particular, the specific needs and risks of children in institutions and with disabilities are comparatively side-lined.

- ✓ The number of ratifications of the Lanzarote and Istanbul Conventions has risen significantly to 45 and 34 respectively.

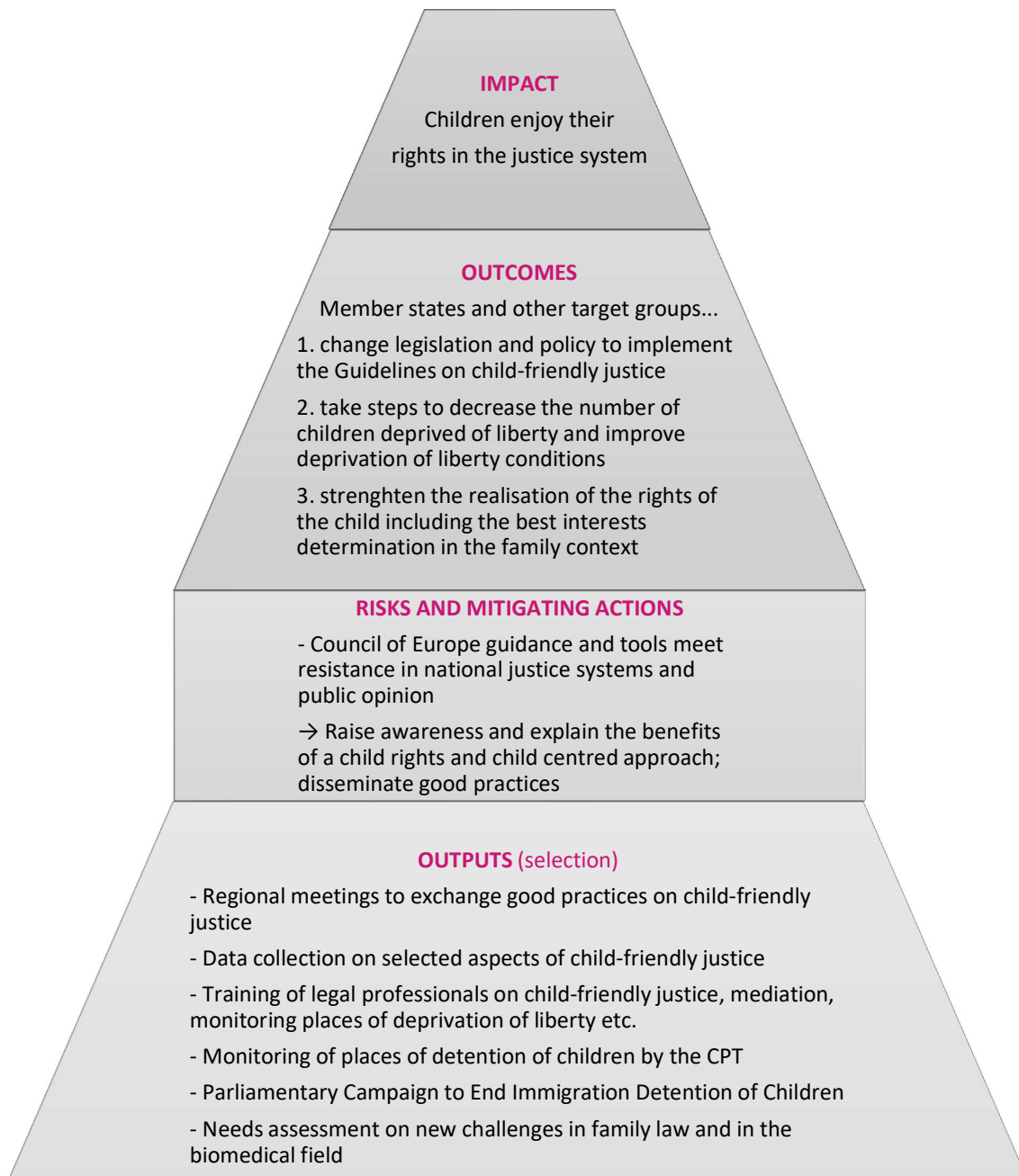
However, ratification by all member states has yet to be achieved, while implementation must be furthered.

- ✓ There is documented use by member states and other target groups using Council of Europe standards and tools to counter violence against children, particularly the Policy Guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence.

However, not all responses to violence against children align fully with the Policy Guidelines' principles and essential elements.

PRIORITY AREA 4: CHILD-FRIENDLY JUSTICE FOR ALL CHILDREN

Strategy performance indicators



Key performance indicators:

1. Evidence of change of legislation and policy to improve children's access to child-friendly justice
2. Evidence of change in legislation and policy to avoid and prevent deprivation of liberty and improve deprivation of liberty conditions
3. Documented use by member states and other target groups of Council of Europe standards and tools on child-friendly justice, deprivation of liberty and family law

The UN SDGs and child-friendly justice for all children

SDG	Targets relevant to child-friendly justice for all children	Relation to the CoE Strategy
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	<p>[52] Children’s right to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them and to access competent, independent and impartial complaints mechanisms when their rights are breached</p> <p>4.1 Promoting child-friendly justice</p> <p>4.2 Protecting children in the context of deprivation of liberty</p> <p>4.3 Children’s rights in the family</p>
	16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels	
	16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	
	16.10 Ensure public access to information	

Children have the right to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them and to access competent, independent and impartial complaints mechanisms when their rights are breached. Further, children in conflict with the law have the right to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and taking into account the child's age and the objective of his or her reintegration into society. In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. This priority area of the Strategy focusses on promoting child-friendly justice, protecting children in the context of deprivation of liberty, and protecting children's rights in the family.

Outputs & mitigating action

Promoting child-friendly justice

The Council of Europe has promoted the implementation of the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice,¹³⁸ by supporting member states in strengthening access to, treatment in and participation of children in civil, administrative and criminal justice proceedings. In 2017, the Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) and the Children's Rights Division developed a training course aimed at lawyers, judges, ombudspersons and other stakeholders on child-friendly justice. The course is currently available in six languages.¹³⁹ This, and other related HELP courses simultaneously serve as action to **mitigate the risk** of Council of Europe guidance and tools being met with resistance in national justice systems, through awareness-raising for those within the judicial system. Regional meetings and national conferences have also taken place to exchange good practices on child-friendly justice, including in Hungary, Georgia and the Ukraine. The Consultative Council of Europe Prosecutors (CCPE) have adopted an opinion on the role of prosecutors in relation to the rights of victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings,¹⁴⁰ which includes specific protections and considerations for child victims and witnesses. One of the key pillars of the EndOCSEA@Europe project¹⁴¹ is the improvement of practices and procedures to uphold the rights of child victims and witnesses within investigations and prosecutions relating to online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Measures have been undertaken to develop a "Barnahus/Children's House" in Slovenia, as part of a joint EU-Council of Europe project.¹⁴² Field research was undertaken in Ljubljana, 2018, with the support of Barnahus experts from Iceland, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands.¹⁴³ National Guidelines for Barnahus in Slovenia and a roadmap towards establishing, operating and evaluating them have been produced. A feasibility assessment on Barnahus in Ukraine has been produced within the remit of the project "Combating violence against women and children in Ukraine".¹⁴⁴ A leaflet explaining the concept and benefits of Barnahus has also been published.¹⁴⁵

The Council of Europe has worked closely with other partners in the area, including the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, and have jointly produced a Handbook on European law relating to access to justice.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁸ Adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 17 November 2010.

¹³⁹ Albanian, English, Georgian, Montenegrin, Romanian, Ukrainian.

¹⁴⁰ CCPE Opinion No. 12 (2017) on "The role of prosecutors in relation to the rights of victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings".

¹⁴¹ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/endocsea-europe>.

¹⁴² See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/slovenia>.

¹⁴³ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/-/setting-up-barnahus-children-s-house-in-slovenia-council-of-europe-experts-from-nordic-countries-supporting-the-process-in-ljubljana>.

¹⁴⁴ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/ukraine>.

¹⁴⁵ Council of Europe (2018), Protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse: Child-friendly, multidisciplinary and interagency response inspired by the Barnahus model.

¹⁴⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and Council of Europe (2016), Handbook on European law relating to access to justice.

Protecting children in the context of deprivation of liberty

Council of Europe member states have been supported in avoiding and preventing deprivation of liberty of children. In particular, the Parliamentary Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children entered its third phase in 2019. Activities within the framework of the campaign include, inter alia, the publication of a study on immigration detention practices and the use of alternatives to immigration detention of children.¹⁴⁷ The administrative migration detention of unaccompanied children has been condemned by numerous bodies across the Council of Europe, including the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees.¹⁴⁸ A number of European Court of Human Rights judgments have ruled that the detention of unaccompanied minors violated their right to liberty and security under Article 5(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).¹⁴⁹ **Action has been taken to seek to improve material conditions and detention regimes, in line with Council of Europe standards.** Notably, The European Court of Human Rights decided upon numerous cases condemning the living conditions of unaccompanied¹⁵⁰ and accompanied¹⁵¹ minors as a violation of their right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment under Article 3 ECHR. The **standards of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)**¹⁵² regarding the protection of children deprived of liberty from ill-treatment and violence have been promoted. The CPT have published a factsheet on immigration detention, which includes standards relating to children¹⁵³ and have undertaken over 20 monitoring visits in places where children are being held in detention since 2016. The Council of Europe has also provided support to the preparation of the **UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty**, notably through a written contribution. The Council of Europe Criminal Law Cooperation has been undertaking activities on dealing with and improving support services for detained juveniles within the Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries.¹⁵⁴

Children in conflict with the law and detention: Findings of the CPT

The CPT annual reports contain thematic monitoring findings, which are relevant to juveniles in detention. It has found that children apprehended due to suspicions of having committed criminal or other offences could face a higher risk of ill-treatment than adults, due to their particular vulnerabilities.¹⁵⁵ It emphasised the need to take special measures, in order to ensure that complaints mechanisms are more accessible to juveniles, as well as those with disabilities and difficulties in understanding or communicating in the official language of the country concerned.¹⁵⁶ In many member states, the CPT found that juveniles on remand, in particular, were frequently held in prisons for adults, even if this was usually in a designated juvenile unit. While there had been significant improvements in recent years in terms of material conditions in juvenile units, it also noted concerns as to small numbers of juveniles being held on remand in given establishments or units, which could amount to *de facto* solitary confinement, and a lack of purposeful activity offered to juveniles in remand detention.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁷ Council of Europe (2017), A study of immigration detention practise and the use of alternatives to immigration detention of children.

¹⁴⁸ See Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees (2017), Thematic Report on migrant and refugee children, chapter III.

¹⁴⁹ ETS No.005. See *Abdullah Elmi and Aweys Abubakar v. Malta* (Application Nos. 25794/13 and 2815/13); *H.A. and Others v. Greece* (Application No. 19951/16); *Sh.D and Others v. Greece, Austria, Croatia, Hungary, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia* (Application no. 14165/16).

¹⁵⁰ See *Abdullah Elmi and Aweys Abubakar v. Malta* (Application Nos. 25794/13 and 2815/13); *H.A. and Others v. Greece* (Application No. 19951/16); *Sh.D and Others v. Greece, Austria, Croatia, Hungary, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia* (Application No. 14165/16).

¹⁵¹ *A.B. and Others v. France* (Application No. 11593/12); see also the judgments delivered by the Court on the same day in the cases of *A.M. and Others v. France* (Application No. 24587/12), *R.C. and V.C. v. France* (Application No. 76491/14), *R.K. and Others v. France* (Application No. 68264/14) and *R.M. and Others v. France* (Application No. 33201/11); *S.F. and Others v. Bulgaria* (Application No. 8138/16).

¹⁵² CPT/Inf/E (2002) 1 – Rev. 2015.

¹⁵³ CPT Inf(2017)3 Factsheet on immigration detention, March 2017, part 10: care of vulnerable persons (in particular children).

¹⁵⁴ See further <https://www.coe.int/en/web/criminal-law-coop/home>.

¹⁵⁵ CPT (2018), 28th General Report of the CPT, para 67.

¹⁵⁶ CPT (2017), 27th General Report of the CPT, para 83.

¹⁵⁷ CPT (2016), 26th General Report of the CPT, paras. 67-68.

Practical guidance for monitoring places of deprivation of liberty of children have been developed. The Council of Europe co-funded a project led by Defence for Children International (DCI) - Belgium, which resulted in a practical guide for monitoring places where children are deprived of liberty¹⁵⁸ and an explanatory note.¹⁵⁹ A Guide for Parliamentarians visiting places where children are deprived of their liberty as a result of immigration procedure has been produced within the remit of the Parliamentary Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children.¹⁶⁰ It is available in three languages¹⁶¹ and has been accompanied by training sessions on monitoring places where children are deprived of their liberty. Finally, the Council of Europe has addressed the situation of **children whose parents are detained**, through adoption of a Committee of Ministers recommendation on the matter.¹⁶²

Detention of accompanied and unaccompanied children: Findings of the PACE

The PACE conducted a study on immigration detention practices and the use of alternatives to immigration detention of children in 2017. It found that, despite significant legislative changes and attempts to change practice, detention of migrant children remained a matter of serious concern in the majority of the non-EU Council of Europe member states. Children were being held in prisons, police facilities and special accommodation centres which were not appropriate to their needs. It found a lack of child-specific legislation in the area of immigration detention and, particularly, alternatives to detention of children, as well as screening systems for the identification of children in need of specific protection. Very few states considered placing children in foster families instead of placing them in closed institutions. There was a lack of accurate data on the number of children kept in detention, whether they were unaccompanied or accompanied, boys or girls, their particular needs, or even their legal status. Effective access to justice, with regard to lodging an appeal to detention, was also a matter of concern. Legal assistance, interpretation, medical care and access to education while in immigration detention were varied and sometimes only theoretical.

Children's rights in the family

The Council of Europe has promoted the implementation of its standards on family law. For example, the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) working group on mediation (CEPEJ-GT-MED), which resumed its work in 2017, has conducted a study on, inter alia, the impact of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on family mediation,¹⁶³ produced a toolkit on mediation development to ensure effective implementation,¹⁶⁴ and a handbook for mediation law-making.¹⁶⁵ A collection of good practices from member states is provided on the CEPEJ platform.¹⁶⁶ As seen,¹⁶⁷ the Council of Europe has promoted policy to support positive parenting through a repository of good practices and tools promoting non-violent parenting,¹⁶⁸ as well as through further translation and promotion of the Recommendation on policy to support positive parenting.¹⁶⁹ The Committee of Ministers recommendation on preventing and resolving disputes on child relocation¹⁷⁰ has been further supported by a Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly on cross-border parental responsibility conflicts.¹⁷¹

¹⁵⁸ DCI – Belgium (2016), Practical Guide: Monitoring places where children are deprived of liberty.

¹⁵⁹ DCI – Belgium (2016), Introduction to the Practical Guide: Monitoring places where children are deprived of liberty.

¹⁶⁰ Council of Europe (2017), Guide for Parliamentarians: Visiting places where children are deprived of their liberty as a result of immigration procedures.

¹⁶¹ Arabic, English, French.

¹⁶² Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 on children with imprisoned parents. Available in Croatian, English, French and Latvian.

¹⁶³ Rec(98)1.

¹⁶⁴ CEPEJ (2019), Mediation development toolkit: Ensuring implementation of the CEPEJ Guidelines on mediation. Available in English, French and Italian.

¹⁶⁵ CEPEJ (2019), European handbook for mediation lawmaking.

¹⁶⁶ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/cepej-work/mediation/good-practices>.

¹⁶⁷ "Priority area 3: A life free from violence for all children – Outputs & mitigating action".

¹⁶⁸ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/repository-of-good-practices>.

¹⁶⁹ CM/Rec(2006)19.

¹⁷⁰ CM/Rec(2015)4.

¹⁷¹ Res 2194(2017).

Action on the best interests of the child in family matters has been undertaken in the context of new family forms and bioethics. Notably, in the area of donor-assisted human reproduction, the PACE have adopted a Recommendation on anonymous donation of sperm and oocytes: balancing the rights of parents, donors and children¹⁷² A study and roadmap have been published on the rights of children in the biomedical field.¹⁷³ They found particular challenges relating to 1. consent, autonomy and legal representation of children by parents or others in relation to healthcare, 2. child participation and the need for child-friendly healthcare and 3. children's access to justice in the field. The Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) have incorporated a children's rights dimension in a Strategic Action Plan on addressing key human rights challenges raised by new developments in the new biomedical field, which is pending adoption. The Council of Europe also contributed to the International Social Service consultation on draft principles for the protection of the rights of the child in the context of surrogacy.

Particular attention has been paid to the assessment process of the best interests of the child in family matters, including in removal from parental, care, placement and reunification decisions. The PACE passed a Resolution in 2018 on striking a balance between the best interest of the child and the need to keep families together¹⁷⁴ and a conference for shared parenting was held under the auspices of the Secretary General in November 2018, with a focus on children's rights and the role of states in safeguarding the best interests of the child after parental separation or divorce. Work in this area is being planned jointly by the child rights intergovernmental committee and the European Committee on Legal Co-Operation (CDCJ). The Commissioner for Human Rights has also published an Issue Paper on realising the right to family reunification of refugees in Europe, which elucidates the important role of the best interests of the child.¹⁷⁵

Outcomes & impact

There have been positive outcomes at member state level under this pillar. 28 member states said that they had changed legislation and policy to **implement the Guidelines on child-friendly justice**: six have either have completed, or are currently undergoing, implementation of the HELP course on child-friendly justice.¹⁷⁶ A number of member states have established or committed to the creation of Children's Houses.¹⁷⁷

Highlights

In **Germany**, the Council of Europe Guidelines were discussed and disseminated in expert discussions and conferences held on the topic of child-friendly justice. In 2017, the National CRC Monitoring Mechanism organised a consultation on child-friendly justice, which was attended by experts at various levels, and from various areas of the justice system. The Guidelines were presented as an important cornerstone for working groups looking at the situation of child-friendly justice in Germany.

In **Serbia**, the Guidelines were also taken into account in recent reform activities. These include a dedicated section to the full application of the principle of the best interests of the child by the judiciary within a national Action Plan and the development of the Free Legal Aid Law, under which free legal assistance may be provided to a child whose right, responsibilities or interests based on law are being decided upon in proceedings. The Guidelines have also been included within teaching material at the Judicial Academy, which provides specialised training courses on the administration of juvenile justice.

¹⁷² Rec 2156(2019).

¹⁷³ Zillén K., Garland J. and Slokenberga S. (2017), The rights of children in biomedicine: Challenges posed by scientific advances and uncertainties.; Liefgaard T., Hendriks A. and Zlotnik, D. (2017), From law to practice: Towards a roadmap to strengthen children's rights in the era of biomedicine.

¹⁷⁴ Res 2232(2018).

¹⁷⁵ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2017), Issue Paper: Realising the right to family reunification of refugees in Europe.

¹⁷⁶ Albania, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Montenegro, Ukraine.

¹⁷⁷ See further "Priority area 3: A life free from violence – Outcomes & impact".

13 member states have indicated taking steps to **decrease the number of children deprived of liberty**, while 4 said that they had taken steps to **improve deprivation of liberty conditions** for children. In both cases, however, action in relation to deprivation of liberty was focussed upon children in conflict with the law, rather than children in or at risk of migration detention.

Highlights

Albania has adopted a Juvenile Justice Code, which aligns with the Council of Europe Guidelines for child-friendly justice. It contains provisions on protection and upholding the rights of children in conflict with the law, as well as those who are the victims or witnesses of crimes. Albania has also adopted a new Strategy on Juvenile Justice 2018-2021.

In **Azerbaijan**, a number of judicial and legal reforms have been carried out, with particular focus on juvenile justice. A Country Programme (2016-2020) has been produced and a Periodic Action Plan on Justice for Children (2016-2017) has been signed between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and **UNICEF**.

In **Belgium**, the Flemish Parliament has adopted a decree which provides for the establishment of complaints procedures and the monitoring of situations in which children are deprived of their liberty.

The **Latvian** probation service has developed a social behaviour correctional programme for young offenders, "Ready! Steady! Go", with the support of Norway Grants. The programme is eight months long and aims to develop the offender's ability to consider and use alternative behavioural patterns in lieu of criminal action.

The deadline for transposing the **EU** Directive on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused in criminal proceedings¹⁷⁸ passed on 11 June 2019. The Directive explicitly refers to and promotes the Council of Europe Guidelines on Child-Friendly Justice. In particular, it focusses on: providing for mandatory assistance by a lawyer; defining common minimum rules on deprivation of liberty, on alternatives to detention and on timely and diligent treatment of cases involving children.

Meanwhile, a significant majority of member states said that they had **strengthened the realisation of the rights of the child, including the best interest determination, within the family context**. Action had been taken to improve early intervention responses and support, encourage and streamline adoption procedures, as, for example, an alternative to residential institutions, to improve contact between children and incarcerated parents, and to establish specialised courts, judges and services in family law cases involving children.

Highlights

Austria's Ministry of Family Affairs has recently launched the online platform "Separation and Divorce", which provides information, counselling and support services for all affected by divorce or separation, including children. Prior to divorce, parents of minor children are required by law to seek advice on the effect of divorce on their children with a recognised counsellor. This form of counselling is currently offered by 1,400 specially trained counsellors in 24 languages.

Croatia has continued to implement the "Parent Prisoner" programme. The programme aims to raise parental competencies of those who are incarcerated so that they can practice active, positive and responsive parenthood, in line with the best interests of the child, as well as to provide them with support during their sentence and separation from their child(ren). In 2017, the programme was delivered to 144 prisoners across 11 criminal institutions.

In September 2017, the Ministry of Justice of the **Czech Republic** held a two-day international conference on immigration detention of children, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs held a two-day conference on the detention of children in social welfare institutions.

¹⁷⁸ Directive (EU) 2016/800.

The **Slovak Republic** has incorporated the principle of the best interests of the child among the fundamental principles of the Family Code. A demonstrative set of criteria has been provided which can be used, inter alia, by judicial and administrative bodies when making decisions concerning a child.

Missing Children Europe launched the project “Voice on Children in Mediation” in September 2017. It aims to promote child-friendly justice through involvement of children in cases relating to international child abduction and cross-border family conflict, ensuring that the child is given the opportunity to be heard, and that their best interests are taken into account.

Overall, survey responses suggest that children are better enjoying their rights in the justice system. All member states responding to the survey felt that the situation had improved to varying extents, and on average, they felt that the child-friendliness of the justice system in their country had “improved”.

Civil society and other stakeholders were slightly less positive, with the majority stating that the situation had “somewhat improved”. These modest findings are in line with the 2018 and 2019 EU Justice Scoreboard results,¹⁷⁹ which found, for example, an increase in the availability of targeted online and child-friendly information relating to justice systems. Several felt that the situation had deteriorated to some degree, particularly in relation to family law matters. The children consulted under the pillar of child-friendly justice had all come into contact with the justice system. Their report, unfortunately, reflected a largely negative experience: the children felt that they had been given little information about or opportunity to be involved in processes, and that the judges involved in their cases were “loud” and even “terrifying”.

Checklist: Key performance indicators

- ✓ There is evidence of significant change in legislation, policy and practice to improve children’s access to child-friendly justice across many member states.

However, not all stakeholders believe that justice systems are sufficiently child-friendly in practice.

- ✓ There is evidence of some change in legislation and policy to avoid and prevent deprivation of liberty and improve deprivation of liberty conditions.

However, there appears to be comparatively less action being taken to prevent, or improve conditions of, children in migration detention.

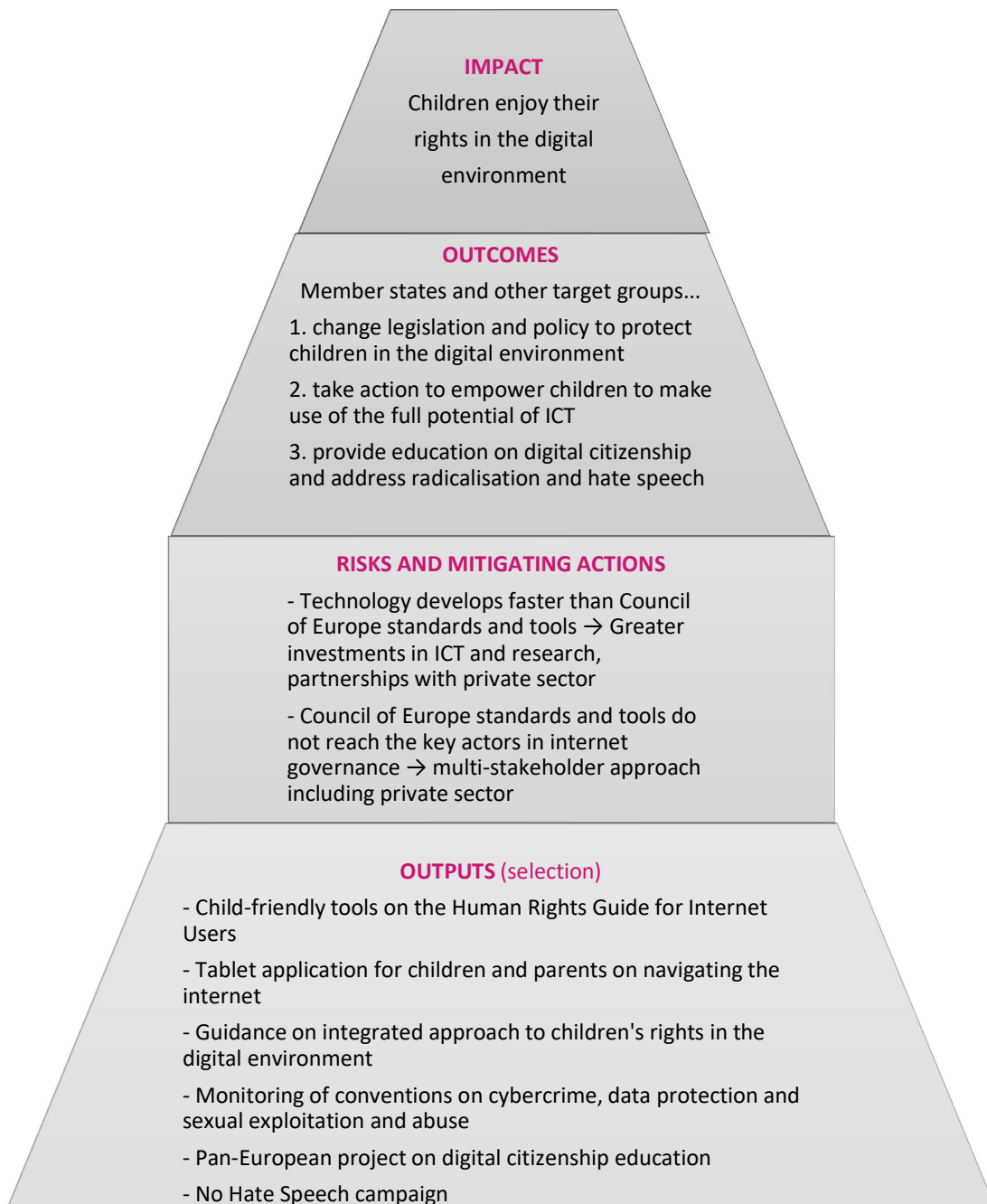
- ✓ There is impressive, documented use by member states and other target groups using Council of Europe standards and tools on child-friendly justice.

However, there is little documented use of standards and tools within a number of specific areas and particularly in migration-related processes.

¹⁷⁹ See https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/eu-justice-scoreboard_en.

PRIORITY AREA 5: RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Strategy performance indicators



Key performance indicators:

1. Evidence of change of legislation and policy to improve children's protection, provision and participation in the digital environment
2. Documented use by member states and other target groups of Council of Europe standards and tools on children in the digital environment

The UN SDGs and the rights of the child in the digital environment

Goal	Targets relevant to the rights of the child in the digital environment	Relation to the CoE Strategy
4. Quality education	4.4 Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship	[60] Promotion of digital citizenship education and competence
	4.A Build and upgrade education facilities that are effective learning environments for all	
5. Gender equality	5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women [and girls]	[58] Promoting and protecting children's right to non-discrimination and participation in the digital environment, paying particular attention to empowering children in vulnerable situations
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure	9.C Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the internet	[58] Promoting and protecting children's rights to access and participation in the digital environment
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	5.2 Protection of children in the digital environment
17. Partnerships for the goals	17.16 Multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources	Risks and mitigation actions - Greater investment in partnerships with private sector to keep pace with technology development - multi-stakeholder approach including private sector to ensure CoE tools and standards reach they key actors in internet governance
	17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships	

All children should be able to safely access Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and digital media, and be empowered to fully participate, express themselves, seek information and enjoy their rights fully, whether online or offline. This priority area of the Strategy focusses on provision for, as well as participation and protection of, children in the digital environment.

Outputs & mitigating action

Guidelines on children's rights in the digital environment

Significantly, **Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment** were adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2018.¹⁸⁰ They provide comprehensive and holistic guidance to member states in maximising the full range of children's rights in the digital environment. The Guidelines promote digital and digital citizenship literacy of children and those around them, call on member states to ensure that business enterprises are meeting their responsibilities to children and call for engagement with all stakeholders, including children. The Guidelines are currently available in 19 languages. A child-friendly version has been produced, while a Handbook for Policymakers, under preparation for the end of 2019, will provide concrete measures for implementing the Guidelines.

Participation of children in the digital environment

Beyond the Guidelines, **the Council of Europe has promoted and protected children's access, information, expression and participatory rights in the digital environment in co-operation with other stakeholders.** A tablet application game, "Online with the Websters", has been produced with gaming developers DUBIT, which aims to raise awareness of safe and responsible behaviour online.¹⁸¹ Other communication tools have been developed and disseminated to children, parents and educators on making full and safe use of ICTs and digital media, including a fully revised, third edition of the "Internet Literacy Handbook".¹⁸² Particular attention has been paid to empowering children in vulnerable situations: children with a diverse range of disabilities were consulted on their experiences of the digital environment and a follow-up report makes practical recommendations for increasing their access and inclusion in the digital environment. It found that, while the digital environment opened up a range of possibilities and can be an "equaliser" for some children with disabilities, they were also disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of their ability to access and make use of its benefits. Drawing on the Recommendation on policy to support positive parenting¹⁸³ and other relevant standards, several publications have been produced, which contain rights-based parenting in the digital age, on topics relating to online child sexual violence and empowering children as digital citizens.¹⁸⁴

Protection of children in the digital environment

A number of Council of Europe conventions provide a framework for protecting children's rights in the digital environment. In line with the Strategy priority actions, efforts have been made **to promote, monitor and support the implementation of these conventions.** The following table provides a non-exhaustive overview.

GUIDELINES BY LANGUAGE

[Armenian](#)

[Azerbaijani](#)

[Bulgarian](#)

[Croatian](#)

[Dutch](#)

[English](#)

[French](#)

[Georgian](#)

[German](#)

[Greek, Modern](#)

[Italian](#)

[Lithuanian](#)

[Portuguese](#)

[Russian](#)

[Serbian](#)

[Slovak](#)

[Spanish](#)

[Turkish](#)

[Ukrainian](#)

¹⁸⁰ CM/Rec(2018)7.

¹⁸¹ Scheduled release for early 2020.

¹⁸² Council of Europe (2017), Internet literacy handbook.

¹⁸³ CM/Rec(2006)19.

¹⁸⁴ Council of Europe (2017), Parenting in the digital age: Parental guidance for the online protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse; Council of Europe (2019), Digital citizenship...and your child – What every parent needs to know and do.

Convention	Promotion	Monitoring	Supporting implementation
Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention)	- Annual European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2017 theme: protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs))	- 2 nd monitoring round on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs	- Opinion on sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos generated, shared and received by children; Interpretative Opinion on the applicability of the Convention to sexual offences facilitated through ICTs - Declaration on web addresses advertising child sexual abuse material or images or any other offences - End Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse @ Europe project (2018-2020), including an international conference on multi-sectoral co-operation to prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse (2019) (mitigating action) - country projects in Ukraine (2017), Republic of Moldova (2018-2020), Georgia (2017-2019), Slovenia (2018-2021) - Children's Protection Programme on the Internet "E-Salama", Morocco
Convention on Cybercrime and its Additional Protocol (Budapest Convention)	- three editions of the Octopus conference on cooperation against cybercrime	- 2 nd assessment round on mutual legal assistance - 3 rd assessment round on assessing implementation of Article 13 on sanctions and measures	- capacity-building projects through the Cybercrime Programme Office (C-PROC): Cybercrime@Octopus (2014-2019), iPROCEEDS (2016-2021), GLACY+ (2016-2021), CyberSouth (2017-2020), CyberEast (2019-2022) - EndOCSEA@Europe (2018-2020) - Mapping study on cyberviolence with recommendations for T-CY
Modernised Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to the Processing of Personal Data	- Convention modernised in 2018 - available in English, French and Arabic - Annual Data Protection Day - conferences on the Convention - creation of Stefano Rodotà Award		- Big Data Guidelines - Guidelines on Artificial Intelligence and Data Protection - Co-operation projects: Georgia, Belarus, Tunisia (2019-2021), the South Programme III (2018-2020) - HELP Course on Data Protection and Privacy Rights (available in 15 languages)
Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)	- Conference: women's rights at the crossroads - Factsheet on the Istanbul Convention and children's rights - Leaflet: questions and answers on the Istanbul Convention (available in 23 languages)	- 1 st monitoring round: baseline evaluation procedure	- HELP course on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (available in 9 languages) - Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism - PACE Resolution 2119 (2016) Fighting the over-sexualisation of children - PACE Resolution 2144 (2017) Ending cyberdiscrimination and online hate
Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings	- Leaflet on victims' rights now available in 44 languages	- thematic monitoring report on trafficking in children - 2 nd monitoring round on labour exploitation - 3 rd monitoring round on access to justice and effective remedies	- HELP course on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (available in 3 languages) - capacity-building and roundtable events - Meetings of national co-ordinators - meetings of specialised lawyers and NGOs - Study: comparison of anti-trafficking regimes and possibilities for collaboration

The Committee of Ministers has also passed several recommendations calling on business enterprises and other stakeholders to fulfil their responsibilities to users of the digital environment, including Recommendations on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries,¹⁸⁵ and on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership.¹⁸⁶

Cyberviolence: Findings of the Cybercrime Convention Committee¹⁸⁷

The 2017 mapping study found that, while many forms of violence online already took place in the real world, the potential scale, lack of barriers and new permutations of violence facilitated by computer systems required specific responses. It found that protective measures in member states often focussed on the protection of children against online sexual abuse and exploitation, but that there was less focus on other forms of cyberviolence, with specific legal responses being less common. It noted several obstacles to the enforcement of criminal laws in relation to cyberviolence: victims frequently may not know what to do to get help and law enforcement authorities may not consider cyberviolence a priority, or sufficiently serious to handle. While social media providers can play an important role in preventing and controlling cyberviolence and protecting victims, their action was often considered insufficient. Difficulties also lie in balancing the prevention and control of cyberviolence with freedom of expression and other rights.

Provision for children in the digital environment

To promote digital literacy and citizenship skills, the Council of Europe has launched a pan-European project on digital citizenship education,¹⁸⁸ which builds on the achievements of the programme on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. The project was based on a multi-stakeholder process, literature review and exchange of good practices. It has developed a set of 10 descriptors for democratic citizenship education competency and published a Handbook on Digital Citizenship Education,¹⁸⁹ which is targeted at learners, teachers, parents and school managers, in particular. Numerous summer schools, workshops and training events have taken place within member states in relation to democratic citizenship education (e.g. in Estonia, France, Germany, Georgia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland). A number of educational tools were developed for the 2017 edition of the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, including 6 tutorial videos for parents on aspects of sexual violence facilitated by ICTs and a digital parenting guide on the topic.¹⁹⁰

The Council of Europe has taken action to counter the use of internet and social media in advocating hate speech, radicalisation and terrorism among young people. The No Hate Speech Campaign¹⁹¹ underwent its second phase in 2016-17, reaching up to 100,000 social media users across 45 countries on each of the campaign's action days. The campaign has continued beyond 2017 through national campaign committees in 43 states. The "Free to Speak – Safe to learn" Democratic Schools for all campaign was launched in 2018,¹⁹² with a focus on addressing controversial issues to promote tolerance and human rights; preventing violence; and dealing with propaganda. The Parliamentary Assembly also adopted a Resolution and Recommendation on ending cyber-discrimination and online hate, which recognises that children are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of both.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁵ CM/Rec(2018)2.

¹⁸⁶ CM/Rec(2018)1.

¹⁸⁷ Cybercrime Convention Committee Working Group on cyberbullying and other forms of online violence, especially against women and children (2017), Mapping study on cyberviolence.

¹⁸⁸ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/digital-citizenship-education-project>.

¹⁸⁹ Council of Europe (2019), Digital citizenship education handbook.

¹⁹⁰ Council of Europe (2017), Parenting in the digital age: Parental guidance for the online protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

¹⁹¹ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign>.

¹⁹² See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn>.

¹⁹³ Res 2144(2017), paragraph 7.4.2.

Outcomes & impact

There is significant evidence of positive outcomes at member state level under this priority area. 34 member states have changed legislation or policy to protect children in the digital environment since 2016. National strategies, action plans or other policy mechanisms have been introduced to protect or provide for children online in a number of member states (and beyond), as the below table demonstrates:

Country	Relevant national strategy, action plan or policy
Croatia	Charter on the Safety of Children on the Internet
Cyprus	National Strategy for Safe Internet for Children (2018-2023)
Hungary	Digital Child Protection Strategy; Digital Education Strategy (2017-2018)
Ireland	Action Plan for Online Safety (2018-2019)
Portugal	Public Prosecutor Office Action Plan on Children and Crimes on the Internet (2019-2020)
Russian Federation	Plan of Key Actions up to 2020 (within the "Decade of the Child" 2018-2027), section X: "safe information space for children"; Plan of Actions to implement the Policy on Children's Information Safety (2018-2020)
Slovak Republic	National Strategy on the Protection of Children in the Digital Environment (preparation)
Sweden	National Digitalisation Strategy for the School System
Morocco*	Joint CoE-Morocco Programme on the Protection of Children on the Internet "E-Salama"

* Non-member state

Highlights (participation)

In **Cyprus**, the National Strategy for Safe Internet for Children (2018-2023) involved all relevant stakeholders, including the Commissioner for Children's Rights Office. The Commissioner's Young Advisors Team consists of children: its members will have the opportunity to express their views on issues relating to children's rights in the digital environment and to act as ambassadors of good digital practices and actions among their peers.

In **Norway**, the National Criminal Investigation Service launched the new "Shareable?" initiative and webpage in January 2019. It aims to raise awareness among young people aged 13-16 about the legal and personal consequences of sharing sexually explicit images, videos or content, so that they are empowered to make better choices for themselves and others. A section of the webpage is designed for parents: it encourages them to talk with their children about the risks they face if they create and/or share sexually explicit materials, and to provide them with guidance on how to help in difficult situations. The webpage is available in Norwegian and English.

Serbia's Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunication has organised three annual "IT Caravan" campaigns since 2016, which target primary school students, their parents and teachers, and with a view to promoting smart and safe use of new technologies. In 2018, workshops for pupils and parents were organised across 26 schools and regional centres between February and March. The events were also accessible online for another 800 schools in other regions. Serbia has also marked the annual "Girls in ICT" day on 18 April, a Serbian initiative with the aim of empowering and encouraging girls to engage with ICTs. Since the initiative began in 2010, 357,000 girls and young women have participated in more than 11,000 events organised across 171 countries.

In spite of their recent adoption, a number of respondents said that there had been, or would soon be, action taken in their country in relation to the Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the

child in the digital environment. This included translation and dissemination of the Guidelines to relevant stakeholders (e.g. NGOs and National Human Rights Institutions) as well as the development of national strategies or action plans, based upon the Guidelines. NGOs and other stakeholders had also engaged with the Guidelines and other relevant Council of Europe tools and standards, including through translation and dissemination, as well as organising thematic conferences. They have also taken significant action in the field, notably through awareness-raising campaigns and materials, online helplines and reporting mechanisms, and the development of guidelines for relevant actors.

Highlights (protection)

The government of **Montenegro** and **UNICEF** have launched a “Stop Online Violence” campaign. It included the development of the app “NETfriends”, which teaches children about the safe use of Internet through a game-quiz. Children and adults can report incidents of violence through the app.

In **Norway**, the Child Ombudsperson released two new reports in 2018 on the basis of: a consultation with 200 children and youth on digital sexual abuse; and a consultation on young survivors’ experiences and advice to services for children affected by violence and sexual abuse. The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs will use the findings of the reports to create a campaign directed at young people between 14 and 17 on digital sexual abuse and violence, as well as within other areas of their work.

The **EU**’s General Data Protection Regulation¹⁹⁴ came into effect across EU member states on 25 May 2018. It includes a number of measures specifically aimed at enhancing the data protection of children, in relation to the conditions applicable to a child’s consent, marketing or advertising aimed towards children, and the creation of user or personality profiles of children.

The **UNICEF** Office of Innovation has launched the “Generation AI” Project, which seeks to engage stakeholders to build AI-powered solutions which help to realise and uphold children’s rights.

17 member states said that they had taken action to empower children to make use of the full potential of ICTs, including through awareness-raising campaigns, child-friendly materials relating to the risks and opportunities of the digital environment and through formal education. Only a small minority said they had provided for education on digital citizenship within national or regional curricula, however. Finally, a significant minority of member states had taken action to address radicalisation and hate speech which is widely carried out online.

Highlights (provision)

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, **Save the Children** analysed the existing digital curricula in the Tuzla Canton and produced a tailored curriculum for primary and secondary schools, in cooperation with the government and other stakeholders. Ten teachers from ten schools in the region were trained as trainers, who in turn have trained 300 further teachers from pilot schools, in the implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum has been piloted in selected schools on more than 6000 children.

In 2017, **Portugal** launched INCoDe.2030: an integrated public policy initiative aimed at enhancing digital competences and promoting digital inclusion and literacy. The initiative aims to enhance the digital competencies of children and young people and to ensure that the current and future workforce have adequate digital skills.

San Marino has introduced digital skills development and citizenship education to foster relationships, inclusion, respect and diversity onto the educational curricula.

The **European Commission** communicated its Digital Education Action Plan in 2018. It contains 11 core actions to improve use of digital technology for teaching and learning, develop digital competencies and skills, and improve education through better data analysis and foresight.

¹⁹⁴ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).

Overall, survey responses suggest that children are better enjoying their rights in the digital environment. All member states responding to the survey felt that the situation had improved to varying extents, with the majority stating that respect for the rights of the child in the digital environment in their country had “improved”. Civil society and other stakeholders were less positive, however, with the majority stating that the situation had only “somewhat improved”. A few Ombudspersons and national human rights institutions felt that the situation had “somewhat deteriorated” in their respective countries, particularly in relation to privacy. Most of the children consulted said that they knew a lot about the internet, although less about their rights online; not all of them felt completely safe in the digital environment. They were concerned, in particular, about the prevalence of exposure to offensive, violent and pornographic content. Many felt that their parents could not support them in all situations relating to the digital environment, and many did not know where to turn to for help online. One NGO respondent aptly noted that children, particularly adolescents, are aware of the risks in the digital environment, but often feel powerless in terms of solutions.

Checklist: Key performance indicators

- ✓ There is evidence of significant change in legislation, policy and practice to improve children’s protection, provision or participation in the digital environment.

However, there is less evidence of comprehensive action across being taken across all three areas, with focus somewhat limited to protecting children from online risks. At the same time, progress in practical, effective solutions for protecting children against risks online remains limited.

- ✓ There is good documented use by member states and other target groups of Council of Europe standards and tools on children in the digital environment.

However, the recent adoption of the Guidelines mean that their full effects are yet to be seen.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: THE STRATEGY TO 2021 AND BEYOND

In spite of significant progress, numerous challenges have been identified in relation to the full implementation of the Strategy. While some of these challenges are not new, others have arisen from developing trends across Europe and beyond. The following section provides an overview of main challenges raised by member states, children, civil society and other stakeholders within the survey responses, consultation and/or CAHENF compilations. It also provides insight into the Council of Europe's potential future work, within the remaining years of the Strategy's implementation, to combat and address these.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

The Strategy overall

There is a need for continued efforts to raise the profile and awareness of the Council of Europe's work on the rights of the child, including the Strategy itself. Promotion of other Council of Europe standards and tools is required to ensure that they are sufficiently utilised. For these purposes, further engagement in information-sharing and dialogue with member states and other relevant stakeholders will be important. Given its position as an intergovernmental, pan-European body, the Council of Europe must keep influencing the global agenda and driving for positive change, complementing and supporting the work of other actors in the field. Finally, efforts must also continue to concretise the Strategy aims and goals, through practical tools and guidance, so that these are readily implementable within member states.

Addressing challenges

The Council of Europe will promote the visibility of its standards at international level, as well as within member states. It will ensure co-operation and synergies with relevant UN bodies, notably the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as with the European Union, the OECD, UNESCO, and other international organisations and civil society. It will contribute to the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocols, among others. Continued support will be provided to member states in the implementation of the Strategy and related standards, including through the provision of tools and guidance.

Transversal challenges

Stakeholders identified a number of challenges which traverse all five of the Strategy priority areas. The lack of adequate financial and other resources was a commonly-cited concern; as was a lack of training and knowledge for those who work with or care for children (whether parents or carers, doctors, social service providers, judges or other legal professionals). Across many member states, there are gaps in legal frameworks and policies and limited investment in assessing the impact of law and policies upon children and their rights. Further, these frameworks, even when in place, are not always implemented and monitored in an effective and child rights-sensitive manner. Some member states are becoming increasingly aware of the need for, and challenges of, sustainable solutions to ensuring and upholding children's rights. Data collection, disaggregation and sharing remains problematic across a range of activities: from ensuring and assisting children's access to services and support, to pursuing justice and carrying out research. Related to this, there is continued room for improvement in coordination and cooperation at all levels and between various sectors, including at local levels. Finally, despite much progress in recent years, children continue not to be perceived fully as human rights bearers, while awareness of children's rights, among all stakeholders, remains low.

Addressing challenges

The Council of Europe will continue to support member states in increasing knowledge, training and capacity, through enabling exchange of good practices and provision of training. Efforts will be made to continue to mainstream children's rights in legal standards and practices, both at the Council of Europe and member state level. Member states will be supported in introducing and enhancing the quality and effectiveness of child rights impact assessments. The Council of Europe will continue to contribute to the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, it will review progress as evidenced by monitoring mechanisms and promoted through standard-setting and exchange of experiences and good practices. Efforts will continue in raising awareness of all stakeholders in relation to children's rights, including through online and audio-visual communication.

Equal opportunities

More than a decade since the economic crisis began, children continue to be particularly vulnerable to its effects, with member states citing a rise or persistence in child poverty as a major challenge. Some member states were concerned about the phenomenon of child homelessness and children living or working on the streets. Difficulties also continue in access to and availability of adequate services for children, including healthcare provision. Inclusive and quality education for all children has not yet been achieved and remains a particular challenge in relation to vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, minority and Roma children, as well as those facing poverty. Child mental health and well-being, as well as healthy life-styles, appear to be attracting increased concern in member states. Mental health issues among children appear to be fuelled, in part, by poverty, lifestyle factors, modern and social media. At the same time, there is increasing awareness of the risks which pollution and environmental degradation pose to a multitude of children's rights, including their health.

While there have been significant efforts to reduce the number of children in residential care facilities, it is clear that Europe is still a long way from achieving complete deinstitutionalisation. Reducing and improving alternative care continues to present a challenge, particularly in relation to early intervention of a child in difficult life situations. Many children continue to be discriminated against on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, race, migration or minority status or disability. The children consulted felt that prejudicial attitudes and peer bullying, in particular, were serious problems. A disturbing rise in right-wing populism and nationalism has been reported across many member states rendering action to build cohesive societies even more urgent. Meanwhile, several years after the heights of Europe's refugee and migrant crisis, member states are now facing questions of how to ensure systemic and sustainable solutions for unaccompanied children, and the effective integration of children affected by migration more generally.

Addressing challenges

The Council of Europe will contribute to the achievement of UN SDG Goal 1 (no poverty), 3 (good health and well-being) and 4 (quality education). It will encourage member states to follow and implement the Committee of Ministers Recommendations on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights, on child-friendly social services and on child-friendly healthcare, as well as the Recommendation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on the social reintegration of children living and/or working on the streets.¹⁹⁵ Policy makers and education actors in member states will be encouraged to engage in work for the development of open and inclusive learning environments. The Council of Europe will carry out a study on good practices in mental health care and the promotion of voluntary measures. In relation to environmental concerns, the Council of Europe will update the Handbook on Human rights and the Environment and, if appropriate, develop a non-binding instrument (recommendation, guidelines).

The Council of Europe will continue to take due account of a gender perspective, building cohesive societies and promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities within its actions. It will

¹⁹⁵ Recommendation 254(2008) of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

contribute to the achievement of UN SDGs 5 (gender equality) and 10 (reduced inequalities). In particular, it will support and regularly review the implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity and hold regular exchanges with the Network of European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points.

Work will continue on measures and interventions aimed at preventing intolerance, discrimination and violence, including peer violence. New trends and challenges to social cohesion will be examined, in areas such as eradication of child poverty, environmental social rights, protection and integration of migrants and refugee children. Member states will be encouraged to promote and implement the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood¹⁹⁶ and the Recommendation on Life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors.¹⁹⁷

Participation

Children continue to face exclusion and barriers in expressing their views on decisions which affect them and having these accorded due weight, with fewest opportunities for participation in law, policy and decision-making, as well as in local and community life. There are particular challenges and barriers to the participation of so-called “seldom heard” children, including girls, children with disabilities, and minority children, as well as those on the move or otherwise affected by migration. At member state level, challenges are faced in the implementation of child participation, including in the capacity-building and training of professionals, as well as development of mechanisms to take children’s views into account. Low awareness or knowledge of the right to participate, as well as negative attitudes, are unfortunately still present in both adults and children. With many member states witnessing challenges to human rights and democratic values, there is increasing need to step up efforts to empower, inform and engage children in civic life. In recent times it has also been noted that children acting as human rights defenders are subject to increased hate speech and harassment. Understanding the challenges that child human rights defenders face will be an important issue to explore further.

Addressing challenges

The Council of Europe will contribute to achievement of UN SDG Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (partnerships for the goals), in particular. Steps will be taken to strengthen effective participation of children in decision-making, both within the Council of Europe and member states, and taking into account the particular difficulties faced by vulnerable groups of children. Efforts will also be made to develop and implement adequate child-safeguarding policies. The 2019 edition of the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse is based on the theme “Empowering children to stop sexual violence” and will take place on 18 November.¹⁹⁸ A child-friendly version of the Lanzarote Convention will be created, again through a child participation process and contributions by children will be taken into account in the report of the second monitoring round of the Lanzarote Committee. Under the EndOCSEA@Europe project, tools and materials on online child sexual and abuse and exploitation will be developed with the participation of children. A study will be carried out and good practices in member states identified on the active political participation of national minority youth. The Council of Europe will promote reforms of education systems and policies to further develop democratic competences as well as participation and inclusion. Member states will continue to be supported in the promotion and implementation of the Child Participation Assessment Tool. The Council of Europe will also support youth participation and youth work as a way of increasing the possibilities for children to contribute actively to society in their living environment, with special emphasis on relevant Council of Europe standards.

¹⁹⁶ CM/Rec(2019)4.

¹⁹⁷ CM/Rec(2007)9.

¹⁹⁸ See <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/children/2019-edition>.

Violence

The risk of violence against children persists in all settings and forms, with girls and vulnerable groups of children at greatest risk. Some of these vulnerable groups are also being overlooked when it comes to specific policies and action (children in institutions), including in contexts like the digital environment (children with disabilities). Although much action has been taken in the area, children continue to experience violence by peers and in school. Disturbing trends of sexual violence carried out by other children have been facilitated by the digital environment. In light of several scandals and investigations across Europe and the rest of the world, there has been increased awareness of the risk of violence against children in institutions, including in the field of sports and in leisure activities. Several challenges also remain in providing frameworks for tackling violence against children. In particular, systematic reporting of incidents, as well as collection, disaggregation and sharing of data, continue to be found wanting.

Addressing challenges

The Council of Europe will continue to work to enhance the implementation of international and Council of Europe standards on the protection of children from violence in member states and contribute to the attainment of the UN SDG Target 16.2 (end all forms of violence against children), in particular. It will continue to promote the effective implementation of the Guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children against violence, including through consideration of the findings of the VAC Report. This will include the development of tools and standards on systems for professionals to report violence against children, and on measure and interventions aimed at preventing peer violence and sexual abusive behaviour by children. Efforts will be made to facilitate exchange of knowledge, good practices and experiences in the area, including through continued development of the Clearinghouse on responses to violence against children. A revised version of the "Gender Matters" manual on combating gender-based violence in youth work will be published shortly.

Child-friendly justice

While significant action has been seen under this priority area, European justice systems continue to face difficulties in adapting to the needs of children. Many felt that there were specific challenges in implementing the best interests of the child in judicial proceedings, particularly in the family law context, and where parents' rights may be perceived as conflicting with those of the child. Children continue to be excluded from meaningful participation in decisions which affect them across the entire board of legal issues.

Too many children in conflict with the law are still being deprived of their liberty, indicating a need for greater attention to alternative measures. Meanwhile, children in migration are still subjected to administrative detention, frequently in unsuitable conditions. With a rising number of children, or children born to parents who are seeking to return from conflict areas abroad, adequate safeguards and legal protections in cases involving children should be applied, and effective policy solutions identified.

Addressing challenges

The Council of Europe will continue to promote and support implementation of the Guidelines on Child-friendly Justice and contribute to the achievement of UN SDG Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), in particular. Work will be carried out to develop and promote tools and standards on the protection of the best interests of the child in situations of parental separation and child-care proceedings, as well as the rights of children and children's participation in the decision-making process within the biomedical sphere. Phase II of the joint EU-Council of Europe project in Slovenia will move towards the establishment of a "Barnahus/Children's House" in the country. Capacities of the judiciary and law enforcement authorities in selected member states are being reviewed with a view to developing actions on how to effectively address online child sexual abuse and exploitation, including through dedicated training modules being made available for relevant professionals as part of the

EndOCSEA@Europe project. Member states will continue to be supported in promoting and implementing the child-friendly justice guidelines on deprivation of liberty¹⁹⁹ and the CPT will continue to carry out monitoring work in places where children are held in detention. The Council of Europe will organise thematic visits and/or exchanges to follow up and support the implementation of new tools for children in the context of migration. Activities will also be carried out to address welfare and child protection challenges relating to child returnees.

Children in the digital environment

Children, as well as their teachers and parents, continue to lack awareness and knowledge of children's rights online and on how to maximise these. In particular, education on literacy, risks and citizenship in the digital world continue to be lacking in classrooms and on national curricula. Not all children have equal access to the internet and digital tools and limits to child participation in the digital environment continue to persist, through a lack of adapted content and platforms.

A significant concern cited by a range of stakeholders, in relation to the digital environment, involves children's access or exposure to harmful or illegal content, including child sexual abuse or exploitation materials, pornography, fake news and extremist material. There is also concern about protecting children's online privacy, whether in relation to data collection and processing, or self-generated content, particularly where it is sexually explicit. Other negative effects of the digital environment, such as isolation and over-use, are also seen as challenges. The rapid development of new technologies and the rise of smart or connected products, among other things, are creating concerns about the future of children's rights in the digital world, with legal frameworks and enforcement already struggling to keep up. A lack of robust, scientific research on the possible effects of the digital environment also presents an ongoing challenge. Increasingly, the necessity of ensuring that business and industry are fulfilling their responsibility towards children, as well as the need to increase coordination and collaboration with the private sector and other stakeholders, is becoming evident.

Addressing challenges

The Council of Europe will contribute to the achievement of UN SDG Goal 4 (quality education), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 16.2 (ending violence against children) and 17 (partnerships), in particular. It will take action to follow up on the implementation of the Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment, including through events and/or exchanges on the topic. The Lanzarote Committee will continue to promote effective implementation of the Lanzarote Convention, including in its application to the digital environment, through the adoption of a report on the second thematic monitoring round. Digital citizenship education will be developed as an integrated and sustainable part of formal education systems in Europe. Research will be carried out on new trends and challenges to social cohesion and social rights in relation to digitalisation and IT developments. The Council of Europe will develop and promote tools and standards relating to children's privacy and data protection rights and education policies will be developed to meet the opportunities and challenges of new developments in the digital environment, including in relation to artificial intelligence. The newly-established Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI) will examine, on the basis of broad multi-stakeholder consultations, the feasibility of a legal framework for the development, design and application of artificial intelligence, based on Council of Europe standards. The Council of Europe will continue to engage with and strengthen relationships with business enterprises, promote their responsibilities in upholding children's rights, and encourage and support member states to do likewise.

¹⁹⁹ Chapter IV A6, deprivation of liberty.

THE STRATEGY: STILL FIT FOR PURPOSE?

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that the Strategy is still very much fit for purpose. It has successfully pinned down priority areas and specific actions which, at this three-year juncture, have stood the test of time. Its foreseen action for the remaining years of the Strategy are well-placed to deal with some of the most significant challenges which children and their rights face today. That notwithstanding, a number of areas and/or actions have been identified for further consideration. This may assist in maximising implementation of the Strategy and ensuring that the full range of challenges posed to children and their rights are comprehensively reflected within the Council of Europe's work, both up to 2021 and beyond.

Going forward, **there are some specific action-points enumerated within the Strategy which have not yet been fully addressed** in the first three years of the Strategy, and which are not currently or comprehensively covered by foreseen actions. This includes:

- ▶ **Equal opportunities:** Stepping up action to promote deinstitutionalisation in all forms, in particular of children under the age of three (and including for children affected by migration) and protecting the rights of children in alternative care; LGBTI children and children affected by poverty; concretising action to support and encourage member states' ratification of the third Optional Protocol to the UNCRC; stepping up promotion and monitoring of implementation and use of standards and tools relating to children on the move or affected by migration.
- ▶ **Violence against children:** Supporting member states in developing, implementing and reviewing integrated national strategies on violence against children;²⁰⁰ stepping up efforts to support remaining member states in achieving a full legal ban of corporal punishment through identifying particular challenges and how these may be overcome, and promoting non-violent discipline and positive upbringing.
- ▶ **Child-friendly justice:** Measures to promote and encourage the use of alternative measures for children in conflict with the law.
- ▶ **Transversal:** Strengthening the Council of Europe's strategic co-operation with certain stakeholders through specific joint actions; stepping up action on children's rights at the local level, including through the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.
- ▶ **Strategy evaluation:** Further tailoring survey/consultation questions to match Strategy criteria and performance indicators for the full-term evaluation.

The Council of Europe may consider whether it wishes to incorporate measures on these areas over the remaining years of the Strategy, in order to maximise its implementation.

Additionally, there are **matters which are not covered by the Strategy or achieved and foreseen action, but which may easily be accommodated by the Council of Europe's planned work:**

- ▶ **Information disorder:** The rise in disordered information is not explicitly covered by the Strategy. Although some future action is foreseen in this area, it is not specifically geared towards children. The issue can be encompassed by efforts to promote digital and media literacy, but effort could be made to ensure that information disorder is explicitly addressed therein.
- ▶ **Children and access/exposure to age-inappropriate content:** There is increasing concern over, and proposed responses to, the effects of child exposure or access to online, age-inappropriate content, particularly pornography. Although illegal or harmful content and its effects are explicitly mentioned in the Strategy, greater focus could be placed on this issue, by the child rights intergovernmental committee, in the context of follow-up to the implementation of the Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the

²⁰⁰ And possibly in contexts beyond violence against children, in line with Target 17.18 of the UN SDGs.

digital environment, in close cooperation with other Council of Europe committees and bodies and with the involvement of relevant business enterprises.

There have been **some other developments, as enumerated by member states and stakeholders, which are not fully covered by the Strategy and achieved or foreseen action thereunder:**

- ▶ **Environment:** There is increasing concern and urgency with regard to the effects of environmental degradation and exposure to toxins upon children, their rights and their future. Environmental action is not explicitly covered in the Strategy and, although there is some future action foreseen on this point, efforts could be increased, by the Council of Europe's child rights intergovernmental committee and/or the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), as well as others: particularly bearing in mind the numerous SDGs which touch on health and the environment.
- ▶ **Child mental health and wellbeing:** There is increasing concern regarding the mental health and well-being of children and young people. This is not explicitly covered by the Strategy and, although some future action is foreseen, it is not specifically targeted towards children. Focus in this area could be increased by the Council of Europe's child rights intergovernmental committee and/or DH-BIO, particularly bearing in mind UN SDG Targets 3.3. and 3.5.
- ▶ **Advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI):** There is increasing interest, along with concern, over advances in AI and its potential impact upon children and their rights. AI is not explicitly addressed in the Strategy. Some action has been taken specifically in relation to children and emerging technologies, in the context of actions on the rights of the child in the digital environment. The Council of Europe will undertake work with respect to the feasibility of a legal framework on AI-related issues as a priority within the newly established CAHAI. However, it is recommended that any future Strategy and action points in intergovernmental work ensure adequate and gender-sensitive focus on the risks and opportunities of AI in relation to children and their rights, while bearing in mind the work of other initiatives at the international level.
- ▶ **Child activists and rights defenders:** The subjection of child activists and rights defenders to abuse and discrimination raises difficult questions about how we protect children when exercising their right to participation in civic life. Although the Strategy has as a priority area participation of all children, this dimension creates a new perspective for this area.

The Council of Europe may wish to take these matters into account when drafting the fourth Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) and/or considering future, cross-sectoral collaboration and mainstreaming.

Finally, awareness of the importance of **meeting the UN 2030 Agenda** is increasing. The UN SDGs, although mentioned within the Strategy, were not comprehensively mapped out in relation to children's rights and the accompanying, requisite actions. The Council of Europe has, and will continue to make, significant efforts to support the achievement of the UN SDGs under the current Strategy. However, with the next Strategy (2022-2027) being implemented at a crucial time, it will be important to ensure that these are comprehensively mapped onto priority areas and action points.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Much progress has been achieved in the first three years of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), with significant action being taken at both the pan-European and member state level. There is widespread agreement that the situation for children and their rights across all five of the priority areas has improved to some extent. There is much justification for optimism in the progress that can be achieved in upholding and enhancing children's rights over the remaining years of the Strategy and beyond. At the same time, it is clear that much work remains to be done. Significant challenges are faced by all stakeholders and at all levels in fully implementing children's rights. Some of these are not new challenges, such as coordination, funding, capacity-training and attitudes towards children's rights, yet they require systematic and sustainable solutions which are proving difficult to fully implement. At the same time, and in the context of an increasingly global, connected and digitalised world, new trends are arising which threaten children's enjoyment of their rights. It is incumbent upon member states to ensure that these challenges are overcome, staying alert to new developments and remaining flexible enough to respond to them, while moving towards full achievement of the UN 2030 Sustainable Agenda.

The Council of Europe will continue and strengthen its efforts to ensure that member states reach the heights for the rights of the child, through the actions outlined in this report and beyond. The Council of Europe's child rights intergovernmental committee will oversee the continuous implementation of the Strategy to 2021, with the possibility of providing for the minor adjustments suggested here. An updated action plan and final report on the implementation of the Strategy will be produced and follow-up to this mid-term evaluation report will be ensured, through the drafting of the fourth Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2022-2027).

APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE & CONSULTATION RESPONSES

1. Country responses received for the general questionnaire on the mid-term evaluation process of the Strategy (date of dissemination: 30 November 2018)

Member state	No. of responses	Institution	Date received
Andorra	1	Ministère des affaires sociales, de la justice et des affaires intérieures, Ministère de l'éducation et de l'enseignement supérieur	27 March 2019
Armenia	1	Human Rights Defender's Office	25 January 2019
Azerbaijan	1	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs	25 April 2019
Belgium	1	Flemish Government - Department of Culture, Youth and Media	22 March 2019
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2*	The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina; University of Sarajevo	30 January 2019; 31 January 2019
Bulgaria	2*	State Agency for Child Protection; Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria	7 February 2019; 27 February 2019
Croatia	2*	Ombudsman for Children; Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy;	28 February 2019; 24 April 2019
Cyprus	1	Commissioner for Children's Rights	13 February 2019
Denmark	2*	Danish National Council for Children; Ministry for Children and Social Affairs	1 February 2019; 31 January 2019
Estonia	1	Ministry of Social Affairs	25 March 2019
Finland	1	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	24 April 2019
France	1	Défenseure des Enfants	7 March 2019
Germany	1	Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	22 March 2019
Hungary	1	Ministry of Human Capacities	8 March 2019
Ireland	1	Department of Children and Youth Affairs	28 February 2019
Italy	1	Department for family policies - Presidency of the Council of Ministers	14 February 2019
Latvia	1	Ministry of Welfare	5 April 2019
Malta	1	Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity	4 April 2019
Monaco	1	Département des Relations Extérieures et de la Coopération de Monaco	27 February 2019

Montenegro	3*	Ministry of Human and Minority Rights; Ministry of Education; Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro	31 January 2019; 11 February 2019; 26 February 2019
Netherlands	1	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports	20 March 2019
Norway	1	Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs	12 March 2019
Poland	1	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy	14 February 2019
Portugal	1	National Commission for the Promotion of Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People	28 March 2019
Republic of Moldova	1	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection	31 January 2019
Romania	1	NAPCRA	26 March 2019
Russian Federation	1	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	25 February 2019
Serbia	1	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs	22 March 2019
Slovak Republic	1	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	26 March 2019
Slovenia	1	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	22 February 2019
Spain	1	Ministry of Health, Consumer and Social Welfare	11 December 2018
Sweden	2*	Ministry of Health and Social Affairs Child Rights Convention coordination group; the Ombudsman for Children	15 February 2019; 28 February 2019
Switzerland**	3	Office fédéral des assurances sociales/Domaine Affaires internationales	22 March 2019; 12 April 2019; 30 April 2019
Ukraine	2*	Ministry of Social Policy; Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine	20 December 2018; 27 February 2019

* Where both a governmental body and Ombudsperson or National Human Rights Institution has responded for one member state, the former is counted in analysis and discussion of "member state" responses. The latter is considered in analysis and discussion of "civil society and international organisations" responses.

** Partial responses. Not taken into account in all general questionnaire statistical analysis.

2. Member state responses received for the focused questionnaire on the mid-term evaluation of violence against children (date of dissemination: 10 October 2018)

Member state	No. of responses	Institution	Date received
Albania	1	State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child	1 December 2018
Andorra	1	Care Service to Children and Adolescents, Ministry of Social Affairs, Justice and Interior	30 November 2018
Armenia	1	Human Rights Defender's Office	23 November 2018
Austria	1	Federal Chancellery/Division for Women, Families and Youth	27 December 2018
Belgium	1	Kind en Gezin	24 March 2019
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees	17 December 2018
Bulgaria	1	State Agency for Child Protection	23 November 2018
Croatia	1	Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy	23 November 2018
Cyprus	1	Commissioner for Children's Rights	17 December 2018
Denmark	1	Ministry for Children and Social Affairs	28 November 2018
Estonia	1	Ministry of Social Affairs	21 November 2018
Finland	1	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	28 December 2018
France	1	Direction générale de la cohésion sociale – Ministère des Solidarités et de la Santé	19 December 2018
Germany	1	Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	24 April 2019
Georgia	1	Human Rights Secretariat of the Administration of the Government of Georgia	17 December 2018
Greece	1	Ministry of Labour, Social Security & Social Solidarity	25 January 2019
Hungary	1	Ministry of Human Capacities	12 December 2018
Ireland	1	Department for Children and Youth Affairs	30 November 2018
Italy	1	Department for Family Policies - Presidency of the Council of Ministers	17 December 2018
Luxembourg	1	Ministère de l'Education nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse	5 December 2018

Malta	1	Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity	30 November 2018
Monaco	1	Département des relations extérieures et de la coopération	4 January 2019
Republic of Moldova	1	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection	23 November 2018
Montenegro	1	Ministry of Human and Minority Rights	20 November 2018
Netherlands	1	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	19 June 2019
North Macedonia	1	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	23 November 2018
Poland	1	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy	23 November 2018
Portugal	1	National Commission for the Promotion of Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People	26 April 2019
Romania	1	National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption	21 December 2018
Russian Federation	1	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	11 January 2019
Serbia	1	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs	18 December 2018
Slovak Republic	1	National Coordination Centre for Resolving the Issues of Violence against Children	23 November 2018
Slovenia	1	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	20 December 2018
Sweden	1	Ministry of Health and Social Affairs/Division for family and social services	28 December 2018
Switzerland	1	Office fédéral des assurances sociales/Domaine Affaires internationales	3 January 2018
Turkey	1	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	21 November 2018
Ukraine	1	Ministry of Social Policy	29 November 2018
United Kingdom	1	Department for Education	22 November 2018

3. Civil society and intergovernmental organisation questionnaire on the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy (date of dissemination: 18 April 2019)

Organisation	Country/level of operation	Date received
A Little Lining Comes	Austria	14 June 2019
Eurochild	Europe	16 June 2019
European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)	EU	14 June 2019
European Commission DG Employment: Social Affairs and Inclusion (Disability and Inclusion)	EU	11 June 2019
European Commission DG Justice and Consumers (Fundamental Rights Policy)	EU	25 June 2019
European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)	EU	20 June 2019
Lumos Foundation*	International	28 August 2019
Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth and Slovenian NGO Network ZIPOM	Slovenia	3 June 2019
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	International	18 June 2019

* Partial response.

4. Child consultation on the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy (implemented by Eurochild and its partners)

Country & implementing partner	Theme	No. of children	Child age-range	Date of consultation
United Kingdom / The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation (UCLan)	Equal opportunities for all children	9	12-18	March 2019
Ukraine / EDUKIDS	Participation of all children	19	13-17	December 2018
Malta / President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society (PFWS)	A life free from violence for all children	13	10-18	December 2018
Germany / Evangelische Jugendhilfe Godesheim (Protestant Youth Welfare Godesheim)	Child-friendly justice for all children	3	12-14	January 2019
Germany / Filmbüros M-V / Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Film e.V	Children's rights in the digital environment	8	10-18	December 2018