



07/05/2026

Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU)

9th PLENARY MEETING followed by

THE THEMATIC EXPERT EXCHANGE on

Technology-Facilitated and AI-Enabled Violence Affecting Children in Conflict: Evidence, Accountability and Protection Responses with a Focus on Ukraine

14-16 April 2026 (Strasbourg and via zoom for speakers intervening online)

Summary Note

Executive Summary:

- The Council of Europe Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU) convened its 9th Plenary Meeting on 14–15 April 2026, followed by a Thematic Expert Exchange on *Technology-Facilitated and AI-Enabled Violence Affecting Children in Conflict: Evidence, Accountability and Protection Responses with a Focus on Ukraine*. Around 100 CGU members and invited experts participated in the three-day event, including representatives of member states, international organisations, civil society organisations, academia, independent experts, and relevant Council of Europe (CoE) sectors.
- During the Plenary Meeting, CGU members discussed accountability for crimes against children, with a particular focus on unlawful deportations and illegal transfer of Ukrainian children, access to education, the safe return of children from CoE host countries to Ukraine, the impact of war on children with disabilities, progress on the Better Care Reform, and transitioning legal protection in Europe.
- The Thematic Expert Exchange focused on emerging forms of technology-facilitated and AI-enabled violence affecting children in conflict settings, including online exploitation, coercion, recruitment through digital platforms and AI-generated abuse material.

Discussions examined prevention, accountability, victim protection and coordinated responses.

- Over three days, participants reaffirmed the progress made in these areas and underscored the necessity of international and interagency cooperation. The CGU was highlighted as an important forum for facilitating dialogue. The meeting was held in accordance with the Chatham House Rule, allowing for frank and open discussions while ensuring that views expressed were not attributed to individual participants or institutions.

Overview of the Plenary Discussions

Updates from CGU Members

Delegations shared updates on Ukrainian children in host states, including access to education, social services and child protection systems, as well as preconditions for safe returns. Ukrainian authorities outlined priorities related to accountability for crimes against children, support for orphans and families, and family-based care. Discussions highlighted current needs and opportunities for continued cooperation.

Accountability for Crimes against Children: Unlawful Deportation and Illegal Transfer of Ukrainian Children

Speakers discussed the unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children, as well as challenges in documenting these crimes. Testimonies of returned children, child-friendly interviewing and Barnahus-based approaches remain central to accountability efforts. Discussions also highlighted trafficking risks, as well as the impact of indoctrination, re-education and militarisation on unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred children.

*Screening and Discussion of the Film *Children in the Fire**

The screening of documentary *Children in the Fire*, co-organised with the Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the Council of Europe, highlighted the experiences of Ukrainian children affected by deportation, indoctrination and war-related trauma. Discussions with the director and a lived experience expert focused on the realities of return and reintegration.

Access to Education in Times of War

Discussions focused on disruptions to education caused by displacement, damaged infrastructure and the ongoing conflict, with nearly 600 000 children lacking access to in-person learning. Participants highlighted challenges affecting children abroad, in frontline areas and in temporarily occupied territories, and underscored the need for psychosocial support, coordinated standards for underground schools and strengthened cross-country cooperation.

Strengthening Coordination and Cooperation in Child Protection Responses and Possible Return Procedures

Ukrainian authorities outlined return procedures for children temporarily displaced abroad, including individual needs assessments and return plans. Discussions highlighted the importance of inter-agency cooperation, information sharing and practical tools supporting child-centred return and reintegration procedures.

Impact of War on Children with Disabilities

During the session, participants discussed main challenges related to fragmented availability and accessibility of services and support to families of children with disabilities. The Chair of the newly created Advisory Group on the impact of war on children with disabilities presented the main takeaways of the Advisory Group's first meeting and outlined future work priorities. These include reflecting on good practices to supporting caregivers and strengthening cooperation and peer exchange between Ukraine and the member states.

Better Care Reform and Integrated Family Support

Progress under the *Better Care Reform* included expanded patronage care and inclusion-focused initiatives, including baby home transformation and mentorship programmes for care leavers. Discussions also highlighted workforce shortages, multisectoral data needs and ongoing efforts to strengthen family-based care and expand the Barnahus model.

Session with the Special Envoy on Ukrainian Children

The Special Envoy highlighted ongoing efforts related to unlawfully deported children and broader Council of Europe accountability initiatives, including the Register of Damage and work towards a Special Tribunal.

Transitioning Legal Protections in Europe

Participants discussed protection measures for vulnerable groups, particularly children, during the transition from Temporary Protection. Discussions focused on balancing integration and voluntary return pathways, as well as challenges related to future legal arrangements and national permit schemes.

Presentation of the YoU Decide Research Report

Missing Children Europe presented findings from a youth-led study on displaced Ukrainian young people in Czechia, Hungary and Poland. Discussions highlighted uncertainty related to the end of Temporary Protection, as well as challenges linked to education, housing, mental health and transition into adulthood.

Overview of the Thematic Expert Exchange on Technology-Facilitated and AI-Enabled Violence

The Thematic Expert Exchange provided a multidisciplinary forum to examine the evolving forms, patterns and drivers of technology-facilitated and AI-enabled violence affecting children in conflict settings, with a particular focus on Ukraine. Discussions brought together experts from child protection, cybercrime, criminal justice, digital governance, academia, civil society and international organisations, reflecting the cross-sectoral nature of emerging digital threats affecting children.

The Exchange highlighted growing evidence that children affected by war and displacement are increasingly exposed to online grooming, sexual extortion, coercion and recruitment into harmful or criminal activities through digital platforms. Experts stressed that conflict-related vulnerabilities - including displacement, disrupted schooling, financial hardship and increased reliance on online environments - significantly heighten children's exposure to digital harm. Particular attention was paid to the recruitment of Ukrainian children through social media platforms into sabotage and other criminal activities, often through manipulation, blackmail or financial incentives. Participants stressed that children involved in such cases should primarily be treated as victims of exploitation.

Participants also examined the growing risks linked to generative AI and emerging technologies, including AI-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM), deepfakes, AI-assisted grooming and the scaling of online exploitation. Discussions highlighted significant gaps in legislation, detection, investigation and victim protection, as technological developments continue to evolve faster than institutional responses. Experts further stressed the need for stronger child-centred and trauma-informed approaches, enhanced digital literacy and prevention efforts, strengthened inter-agency coordination, and closer cooperation with technology companies and international partners.

Key Takeaways and Way Forward

Over three days, participants reaffirmed the importance of coordinated international and inter-agency responses to the evolving challenges affecting children of Ukraine, including accountability for crimes against children, safe return and reintegration, family- and community-based care, access to education and psycho-social support, and disability-inclusive services.

Experts also highlighted growing risks linked to technology-facilitated and AI-enabled violence affecting children in conflict settings, stressing the importance of prevention, digital literacy, child-friendly reporting mechanisms, cross-border cooperation and coordinated responses across relevant sectors and institutions.

Participants reaffirmed the role of the CGU as a cooperative platform for dialogue, coordination and exchange of practices. The CGU Secretariat will continue exploring possible follow-up activities and practical deliverables in cooperation with member states, Ukrainian authorities and relevant partners.