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NEWSLETTER

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF OMBUDSPERSONS FOR CHILDREN



ENOC NEWS

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Launch of ENOC 2026 work theme

ENOC kicked off 2026 activities around the main priority topic of **the rights of LGBTQIA+ children** in Europe.

Through advocacy, cooperation among members, and meaningful youth participation, ENOC will address key challenges affecting respect, protection and fulfilment of the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people.

More information on our 2026 activities will follow in the next editions.

ENOC Bureau first meeting in 2026

In February 2026, the ENOC Bureau held its first in-person meeting of the year, hosted by the Children's Rights Commissioner in Flanders (Belgium), with the support of the ENOC Secretariat.

The Bureau discussed in great detail the 2026 work programme, focusing on the rights of LGBTQIA+ children, planned events, representation strategy, and internal business, including governance and membership to ENOC.



SAVE THE DATE

 **WORLD HEALTH DAY**
7 April 2026

 **ENYA PROGRESS CHECK MEETING**
Online
May 2026

 **ENOC SPRING SEMINAR 2026**
Oslo, Norway
8-9 June 2026

 **ENYA FORUM 2026**
Dublin, Ireland
1-2 July 2026

 The 7-member Bureau is responsible for the overall management of the Network, including governance, administration, and financial oversight.

It works closely with the Secretariat to ensure effective implementation of ENOC's activities.

Read more about the ENOC Bureau and the Secretariat [here](#).



ENOC online training on child participation - Launch of ENYA 2026

On 24 February 2026, ENOC held its **annual online training on child participation and child protection when engaging with children**, officially launching ENYA 2026 - the [European Network of Young Advisors](#).

This year, ENYA focuses on advancing **the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people**. The ENYA General Coordinators for 2026 are Laura McFall from the Office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and Timmy Hammersley from the Ombudsman for Children's Office in Ireland.

The training brought together **representatives of ENOC member institutions**, but mainly **ENYA country Coordinators**, who play a key role in supporting and guiding participating Young Advisors throughout the project implementation. They are central to the first phase of ENYA, which includes a range of in-country activities enabling young people to develop an informed and rights-based opinion on the annual theme.

In light of the particular vulnerability of this group of children and young people, the training explored how to **ensure safe and inclusive participation, strengthen the link between child participation and child protection, and empower young people to confidently express their views** at the regional, national and European levels.

ENOC launches its official LinkedIn account

[Follow our official page](#) to stay informed about ENOC's work, publications, activities at the European and international level, and key developments in children's rights across our network.



ENOC Co-event - Roundtable with Eurochild and European Parliament VP

On 5 February 2026, ENOC and Eurochild co-organised the roundtable "Joining Forces: Strengthening Cooperation for Children's Rights in Europe" at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, hosted by Vice-President Ewa Kopacz.



The hybrid event brought together Independent Children's Rights Institutions (ICRIs), civil society organisations and EU stakeholders to strengthen cooperation at national and European levels.

More than 50 representatives from 30 ENOC member institutions participated in the event, including members of the ENOC Bureau and the ENOC Principal and Assistant Coordinators.

The discussion focused on three key areas:

- **Combating child poverty and social exclusion**, including access to key services under the European Child Guarantee
- **Protecting and promoting children's physical and mental health**
- Addressing the **rise of anti-rights movements and their impact** on independent children's rights organisations



During the roundtable, ENOC Chair Vasile Coroi presented the **ENYA 2025 recommendations on children's right to physical health**, developed with the participation of more than 230 young people.

Their perspectives provided an essential contribution to policy discussions at national and European levels.

Watch the video recording [here](#).

EU & INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FIELD

CoE - Ukrainian children still most affected after four years of war

Four years after the invasion of Ukraine, the [Council of Europe warns that children continue to bear the brunt of the war.](#)

Millions remain displaced, education is severely disrupted, and many face deep psychological trauma.

The CoE calls for the safe return of deported children, sustained support for refugees, and accountability for violations of international law.



Artwork by Christian Guémy alias C215

European Commission - Launch Action Plan against cyberbullying

The European Commission has launched a new Action Plan to combat cyberbullying and **better protect children and young people online**. The plan aims to tackle the rising of online harassment, affecting around 1 in 6 young people, by strengthening prevention, reporting and support across Members States.

The initiative includes the development of an EU-wide reporting app, stronger prevention measures, and support for national strategies to improve digital literacy, reporting mechanisms, and victim protection across Member States. The plan adds existing EU tools such as the Digital Services Act and broader initiatives to create safer online environments for minors, and will be implemented with national authorities, civil society and young people's participation.

Read more about the [Action Plan here.](#)

CoE Commissioner for Human Rights - Caution over social media bans

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty, has **urged governments to prioritise regulating social media platforms rather than imposing blanket bans on children**. He calls for stronger "safety by design" rules, greater algorithmic transparency, limits on targeted advertising to minors, and effective accountability measures that fully respect children's rights.

Read the [Commissioner's shout-out here.](#)

European Parliament - Coordinator on Children's Rights 2025 Annual Report

The European Parliament Vice-President and Coordinator on Children's Rights, Ewa Kopacz, released her 2025 Annual report on her mandate of Coordinator on Children's Rights. More specifically, the report focused on 2025 work theme on:

- **children's physical and mental health**
- **young people's online safety**
- and those **affected by armed conflicts**.

VP Kopacz collaborated with various Parliamentary Committees to address the rights of **children in alternative care** and successfully advocated for the inclusion of child rights impact assessments in new EU legislative proposals.

Efforts also focused on ENOC's youth participatory project ENYA, particularly in mainstreaming the views of the young advisors who were part of it. This collaboration was highlighted at the 29th ENOC Annual Conference in Bucharest, where discussions focused on **children's right to physical health**, including the need for a regulatory framework for energy drinks, vapes, and universal access to healthy nutrition.

VP Kopacz also actively promoted **ENYA 2025 recommendations within the Parliament's Environment and Public Health committees** to influence future safety standards for minors. This ongoing cooperation ensures that children's unique views and perspectives, promoted by national Ombudspersons for Children, directly inform EU-level decision-making on their rights and well-being.

[Read the report here.](#)

European Court of Human Rights – Children must be heard at all costs

In *M.P. and Others v. Greece* (2025), the European Court of Human Rights found that Greece violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights by ordering the return of two children under the 1980 Hague Convention without considering their views.

For the first time, the Court clarified that **national courts must consider hearing children's views** in international abduction proceedings, stressing that children's participation is key to assessing their best interests.

The decision has already been recognised as one of the **Court's most significant rulings of 2025**.

[Find more info here.](#)

**European
Commission - New
Expert Group
Network
Preventing Child
Sexual Abuse**

The European Commission has launched [a new Expert Group Network for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse](#).

The network brings together experts, policymakers, and practitioners from across the EU to share knowledge, strengthen cooperation, and support prevention efforts against child sexual abuse and exploitation.

**UN Committee on the Rights of the Child - Joint
Statement on Artificial Intelligence
and Children's Rights**

On 19 January 2026, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), together with several UN agencies and international partners, adopted the **Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Rights of the Child**.

The initiative establishes the first international framework specifically aimed at ensuring that **AI is designed, developed and used to respect and protect children's rights**. It responds to the rapid expansion of AI technologies that increasingly shape children's lives, including in education, healthcare, access to information and online participation.

The Statement identifies 11 priority areas, including child safety and data protection, to guide governments, international organisations and businesses in applying a child-rights-based approach to AI.

[Read the Statement here.](#)

UPDATE ON ENOC MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

BELGIUM/Flanders: Annual Report 2025

The Children's Rights Commissioner for Flanders has published the 2024–2025 Annual Report, highlighting the persistent barriers that prevent children from fully enjoying their rights in practice.

The report identifies recurring challenges in **education, youth care and family**



BELGIUM/French Community - Annual Report 2024-2025

In his 2024-2025 report, the General Delegate for Children's Rights (DGDE) for the French-speaking Community in Belgium, highlighted growing youth distress and called for child mental health to be prioritised. The report also addresses issues such as school life, bullying, the digital environment, and precariousness, and proposes recommendations to better support children.

[Report available here](#) (in French).

situations, with particular concern for **children in vulnerable circumstances**. It underscores how complex procedures, limited access to services and gaps in protection in Flanders continue to leave many children "at the threshold" of their rights, and calls for structural action to ensure their safety, dignity and effective access to support.

[Report available here](#) (in Dutch).

ESTONIA - Children's Rights Report 2025

The Estonian Chancellor of Justice released its 2025 report, which focuses on children's rights in the digital age.

It mainly addresses **social media addiction, cyberbullying, and rising school-related stress**.

The report also highlights the launch of "AI Leap", providing free Estonian-language AI tools to schools, the creation of more child-friendly prison visiting rooms, and stronger child participation through a youth advisory board influencing national policies on digital regulation and sports coaching.

[Report available here](#) (in English).



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