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ENOC NEWS

ENOC 27th Annual Conference

The ENOC 27th Annual Conference “**The Strength of Independent Children’s Rights Institutions: Upholding Children’s Rights in Europe**” took place on 19-20 September 2023 in Brussels, Belgium, hosted by the [Children’s Rights Commissioner for Flanders \(Belgium\)](#). The main dissemination event of ENOC’s annual work brought together Ombudspersons and Commissioners for Children from across Europe, **18 Young Advisors from ENYA**, representatives of key European and International Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations, governmental authorities from Flanders (Belgium), academics, experts and stakeholders working in the children’s rights field.

A panel debate with international experts focused on various ways in which ICRI’s can act in Europe to both increase their influence and better defend and support children’s rights and interests. **Regina Jensdottir**, Head of the CoE Children’s Rights Division highlighted the important role ICRI’s have in being bridges between children’s needs on the ground and the CoE and the European level. **Sabine Saliba**, Eurochild Secretary General drew attention to the anti-child movement in and outside of Europe targeting NGOs, children’s rights defenders and HR instruments (e.g. CRC, Istanbul Convention) and urged ICRI’s to use their mandate to monitor and counteract the movement. **Alex Conte**, Executive Director of Child Rights Connect reminded ICRI’s to partner with Child Human Rights Defenders and support their public action, already well established on climate justice, discrimination and poverty. **Ton Liefwaard**, Professor of Children’s Rights at Leiden University further emphasised that ICRI’s can never be neutral in their mandate to protect and promote Children’s Rights, and need to find a way to test their powers and hold governments accountable.



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Publication of the ENOC 2023 policy position statement

The ENOC 2023 policy position statement **“Strengthening ICRI’s and recognising their unique role”** was endorsed by the 27th ENOC General Assembly held on 21st September 2023 in Brussels, and published in the beginning of October 2023. The position statement **was informed by the recommendations** of Young People who participated in 2023 **ENYA project**, and by the research conducted by experts **Prof. Ursula Kilkelly** (University College Cork) and **Dr. Katrien Klep** (Leiden University) on behalf of ENOC. The study provided an overview of the structure, standing and powers of ENOC members, which influenced the recommendations advanced by ENOC to international, national and local institutions, and the commitments they made on the matter. You can find the policy statement [here](#).

SAVE THE DATES!



Strasbourg

8th plenary meeting of
CDENF
14-16 November 2023



Online

Policy roundtable on
children and young people
in the digital world
14 November 2023



European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

18 November 2023



Brussels

EU Network on children’s
rights
28 November 2023

Key recommendations:

- Promote the establishment of ICRI’s, ensuring they meet the minimum standards set out in Paris Principles & GC No.2
- Monitor that in countries where ICRI’s exist, state authorities provide adequate child specific resources to increase ICRI’s visibility & capacity to effectively carry out its mandate
- Periodically assess whether states provide the legislative basis and powers, the required technical, financial, human & other resources to ensure the fulfilment of the ICRI’s mandate
- Enshrine in national/regional law an ICRI with adequate powers and resources to effectively protect and promote the rights of all children under the CRC
- Resource, develop and promote the independence & standing of existing ICRI’s by guaranteeing autonomy in budgetary, staffing, communication and strategy matters



ENOC 27th General Assembly

The ENOC 27th General Assembly was held on 21 September in Brussels. ENOC members **endorsed the 2023 policy statement, elected the new Bureau, the ENYA 2024 Coordination Office, and approved the Network’s accounts for 2022.** The meeting also included the presentation of 2023 Annual Activity Report and a brainstorming session on the ENOC 2025 annual work topic.

The new ENOC Bureau 2023-2024 is composed as follows:

- Caroline VRIJENS - current Chairperson (Belgium, Flanders)
- Elina PEKKARINEN - Chairperson-elect (Finland)
- Salvör NORDAL - past Chairperson (Iceland)
- Andres ARU - Secretary (Estonia)
- Solaýman LAQDIM - Treasurer (Belgium, French Community)
- Ketevan SOKHADZE - Ordinary Member (Georgia)
- Hellenca PIRNAT DRAGICEVIC - Ordinary Member (Croatia)

Publication of the ENYA Report and Recommendations

The Report on the work carried out in 2023 by the European Network of Young Advisors (ENYA) as part of the ENOC Annual theme is now [available](#). This report and the recommendations are the outcome of the ENYA 2023 activities and provide **young people’s views and expectations on the work of ICRI’s**. All the recommendations put forward and voted upon by young people at the ENYA Forum are included in the report and reflected in the ENOC 2023 policy statement on “Strengthening ICRI’s and recognising their unique role”.

Click on the image to access the report



**LET’S TALK YOUNG, LET’S TALK
ABOUT THE PROTECTION &
PROMOTION OF CHILDREN’S
RIGHTS**

REPORT ON THE WORK CARRIED OUT IN 2023 BY
THE EUROPEAN NETWORK OF YOUNG ADVISORS
(ENYA) AS PART OF ENOC’S ANNUAL THEMATIC
POLICY AREA



Co-funded by
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ENOC'S CONTRIBUTION TO EXTERNAL EVENTS

ENOC participation in CoE Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU)

After a preparatory meeting was held on 4 October 2023, the first meeting of the CoE Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine will take place on **30 November and 1 December 2023** in Strasbourg and online. **Andres Aru**, Bureau member and Head of the Children's Rights Unit at the Ombudsman's Office (Chancellor of Justice) of Estonia, will participate in the meeting on behalf of ENOC. The group's objective is to **facilitate the exchange of information regarding the situation and needs of Ukrainian children living in CoE Member States**.

ENOC participation in 25th National Conference of Developmental Psychology and Psychology of Education

On **25-27 September 2023**, **Salvör Nordal**, ENOC past Chairperson and Ombudsman for Children of Iceland, participated in the 25th National conference of Developmental Psychology and Psychology of Education, held at the University of Foggia, Italy. Salvör presented the **ENOC 2022 annual work on Climate Justice**, the ENYA project and children's role in the fight against global warming, as well as [CRC General Comment No. 26](#).

EU & INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FIELD

EU Children's Participation Platform Advisory Board Meeting

On **22-23 October 2023**, in **Brussels**, the EU Children's Participation Platform Advisory Board Meeting took place. **Both children and adult members** came together to discuss the **2024 CPP topics (Phase 1)**, for which child-friendly online survey, focus groups and interviews with children are planned in the following areas:

1. *Feeling safe*
2. *Democracy and voting*
3. *EU Children's Participation Platform website*
4. *What worked, what didn't and what we want to do next?*

CoE Committee of Ministers adopted new Recommendation on strengthening reporting systems on violence against children

The new [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2023\)8 on strengthening reporting systems on violence against children](#) was approved by Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) at its plenary meeting held in Reykjavik in March 2023, and adopted by the CoE Committee of Ministers on 6 September 2023. CoE Secretary General **Marija Pejčinović Burić** said that the "Recommendation will guide our member states in ensuring that effective reporting mechanisms are in place to uphold the rights of the child." Read the Recommendation [here](#).

Click on the image to access ENOC 2022 Annual Theme webpage



General Comment No. 26

Building universal standards for governments to uphold children's rights impacted by the environmental and climate crisis



Click on the image to access the Child Participation Platform webpage!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

['Holding Our Own: A Guide to Non-Policing Solutions to Serious Youth Violence'](#):

alternatives to policing interventions in addressing social issues.

ECtHR: hearing in the case of *Duarte Agostinho and Others v. Portugal and 32 Others*

The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights heard its [first case](#) on children's rights and climate on 27 September 2023. The case, lodged in 2020, was brought by six Portuguese children against 33 European States. The applicants demand that states uphold their **legal duty to reduce fossil fuels related emissions and prevent climate harms**. The complaint relies on **Articles 2, 8, and 14 of the ECHR** (Respectively the right to life, right to privacy, and right to not experience discrimination). Read the ECtHR Press Release [here](#). The ruling is expected in 2024.



Click on the icon to watch
the hearing held
on 27 September 2023



UN Statements on grave violations of children's rights in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

On 13 October 2023, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a statement in reaction to the "mass killings of dozens of children in the Kibbutz Kfar Aza, and about the deaths of so many children in Gaza as of 12 October". The Committee further declared that "**Children must not be used as pawns in war**" and called for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Click on the image
to read the CRC statement!



On 18 October 2023, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, **Dr Najat Maalla M'jid** and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, **Virginia Gamba** reminded "all parties that, **in armed conflict, children must be protected from all grave violations against them**, including recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access". Read the statement [here](#).

Lanzarote Committee urges Russia to co- operate on the protection against sexual exploitation and abuse of unlawfully transferred or deported Ukrainian children

On 26 September 2023, the Lanzarote Committee adopted a [statement](#) condemning the lack of an appropriate response from the Russian Federation, and inter alia urged "to immediately return these children and reunite them with their families would reduce such a risk [of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse]".



Crystal Scales of Justice Prize awarded to Cypriot children's initiative

The **Judicial Training School** and "**Hope For Children**" - **CRC Policy Center (Cyprus)**, won the 2023 "Crystal Scales of Justice" Prize for its "**Kids in Court Game**" initiative. The project prepares children psychologically and emotionally to testify in court as witnesses through games. You can watch a video presentation of the project [here](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Lanzarote Committee Factsheets on "[Addressing the challenges raised by child self-generated sexual images and/or videos](#)"
- [No one is too young to fight for climate justice](#): Rylee Brooke (15 y.o.) talks about her journey as a climate activist
- [Toolkit on Bodily Autonomy according to Young People](#) by Youth Coalition for Sexual Reproductive Rights, based on year-long youth-led participatory consultation with historically marginalised groups of young people



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UNCRC Statement on article 5 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child - Provision direction and guidance parents give their children should reflect the evolving capacities of each child

On 11 October, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a statement on Art.5 of the CRC, to clarify the concepts of parental guidance and evolving capacities of the child. It also aims to clarify how article 5 achieves a balance between children's rights, the parental rights and obligations, as well as the State's responsibilities. Below are some key points of the [Statement](#):

- parents' responsibilities, rights and duties to guide their children is not absolute but, rather, *delimited by children's status as rights holders*
- when children reach a sufficient level of maturity and capacity to exercise their rights independently, there will be a *decreasing need for parental direction and guidance*
- *neither the 'protection of the family', nor references to culture or religion, can be used as a justification* for laws, policies or practices that infringe upon the rights of children, especially girls.

Human Rights Council 54 session

The 54 session of the Human Rights Council took place from 11 September to 13 October 2023. A [panel discussion on cyberbullying against children](#) was held, and the **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report on the Rights of the child and inclusive social protection**. Read the English version of the report [here](#), and its **child-friendly version** [here](#).

UPDATE ON ENOC MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

SLOVENIA - Annual Report of the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia 2022

In September 2023, the English version of Annual Report of the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia was published (available [here](#)). The English translation of the **National Preventive Mechanism's Annual Report** can be found [here](#). It includes a section on the visits carried out by the Ombudsman to "crisis centres", "specialist centres for children and adolescents with emotional and behavioural problems and disorders" and the recommendations that followed.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - Annual Report on the results of the activities of the Institution of The Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022

The English translation of the 2022 Annual Report is available [here](#). Section VIII on the Rights of the Child, provides and **in-depth reporting** of all the activities that the institution put in place on Children's rights, inter alia: domestic violence, violence in schools, and the right to education.