

CFJ-EN Annual Seminar

“Transforming Justice Systems for Children in Migration”

CONCEPT NOTE

Genoa, Italy
26-27 October 2023

Practical details

Working title of the event:	Transforming Justice Systems for Children in Migration
When?	Thursday 26 October 2023: 6.00 pm – 23.00 pm CET Friday 27 October 2023: 9.30 am – 4.30 pm CET
Where?	Genoa, Italy
Language of the seminar:	English / Italian
Seminar Format:	In-person event
Expected participants:	Approx. 100 people

General Context

Children in migration are involved in administrative proceedings, while some of them are also overrepresented among children suspected, accused or condemned for a crime. They are more at risk of becoming victims of trafficking or exploitation, and/or victims of discrimination as a result of the ever-growing xenophobic narratives in Europe. Before civil or criminal courts, they may face additional burdens in accessing justice, reparation and compensation.

The war in Ukraine brought additional attention to the importance of ensuring that every child asylum seeker receives the same level of treatment and care, independently from the region they may come from. Every child has a singular story: some arrive accompanied by their family or a responsible adult, some are under the care of relatives or friends, some are separated from their caregivers during their journey, and others have left their country alone. Some children were born in Europe from migrant parents.

The workshop on “Child friendly justice in administrative proceedings and ways to safeguard it”, held in October 2022 during the first CFJ-EN Annual Seminar raised many issues children face in administrative proceedings due to their migration status (access to legal assistance, right to interpretation, access to information, deprivation of liberty, etc.). For its 2023 annual seminar, in close partnership with Defence for Children International Italy, the CFJ-EN therefore seeks to shed light on the diversity of situations and challenges children in migration are facing while attempting to access justice and legal remedies and push towards transforming justice systems to fit the needs of children in migration.

General and Specific Objectives

The **General Objective** of the Annual Seminar is to **promote the human rights of children in migration in contact with justice systems** and generate opportunities for collaborations among national and regional stakeholders to guarantee that children in migration can effectively access justice in Europe.

The **Specific Objectives** of the Annual Seminar are to:

1. **Take stock** of where we stand in Europe in relation to access to justice for children in migration
2. Highlight current **obstacles** children in migration face in accessing justice and understand why they are not systematically granted **remedies**
3. Examine the extent to which **child friendly justice standards** apply to children in migration and reimagine how current procedures could be improved
4. Share **promising practices and solutions** which can transform justice systems to adapt them to the needs of children in migration

Lead Questions that the Seminar aims to address

1. Which are the current barriers that children in migration face in civil, criminal and administrative proceedings (as victims, suspects and/or accused, asylum seekers, migrants, unaccompanied or accompanied children)?
2. Which remedies are currently granted to them and why are some remedies not granted?
3. To what extent do child friendly justice standards apply to children impacted by civil, criminal or administrative procedures?
4. What opportunities exist and how can we build together an ideal model to ensure that children in migration can effectively access justice?
5. How can we strengthen the agency of children in migration to ensure they can effectively access justice?

Expected Results

1. Increased knowledge of professionals working in the area of migration and child justice about barriers children in migration face when accessing justice, existing opportunities and promising practices.
2. Increased awareness of professionals on child friendly justice standards that need to apply to children in migration
3. Increased understanding of professionals on how strengthening children's in migration agency can lead to enhance their access to justice
4. Seeds are planted for regional collaborations that will enable actors to improve their practice pertaining to access to justice for children in migration

Thematic Workshops

Following on the model used during the 2022 CFJ-EN Annual Seminar, the purpose of the thematic workshops is to explore several topics linked to the Seminar's Main theme. A self-designated CFJ-EN Member will take the lead in the organisation and delivering of each workshop.

Expected participants

In addition to representatives of each member organisation of the CFJ-EN, and to its operational team, the event will be open to external participants upon targeted invitation by the CFJ-EN and its members:

- From regional institutions: European Commission, European Parliament, EU Fundamental Rights Agency, Council of Europe, Council of the Baltic Sea States, UNICEF
- From national public institutions: ministry delegates, law- and policymakers
- Legal practitioners: judges, prosecutors, children’s lawyers
- Civil society organisations, regional alliances and network representatives – especially organisations working on migration issues, such as the European Guardianship Network, Missing Children Europe, PICUM, ECPAT, etc.
- Intersectoral practitioners and interpreters: child psychologists, social workers, probation officers
- Academic world: researchers, law clinic heads, school of magistrates’ academic advisors

Rationale of the CFJ-EN Annual Seminars

The CFJ-EN is funded under a Framework Partnership Agreement with the European Commission. To ensure that the Network’s mission is achieved, the CFJ-EN committed in its multi-annual action plan to the organisation of annual seminars with a view to strengthen and further develop the Network. The purpose of the annual seminars is to create a space for exchange, mutual learning, resources sharing and capacity building among practitioners and policy makers in Europe working towards respecting the rights of children in contact with justice systems.

Annual Seminars are therefore dynamic and interactive spaces, which contribute to build bridges with other Networks and Alliances, enhance collaborations with key regional institutions, namely the European Union and the Council of Europe, and promote the dissemination of promising practices and innovative ways of working with children who are in contact with justice systems, whether in criminal, civil or administrative proceedings.

Indicative Agenda

Thursday, 26th October 2023

6.00 pm – 7.30 pm

Welcome reception with keynote speeches

- CFJ-EN President
- Defence for Children International - Italy
- Italian Ministry of Justice (tbc)
- Representative from Municipality of Genova/Region (tbc)

8.00pm – 11.00 pm

Social Dinner

Friday, 27th October 2023

8.30 am – 9.00 am

Arrival of participants / Registration

9.00 am – 9.30 am

Plenary session I – Scene setting

- Agency for Fundamental Rights of the European Union (tbc)
 - Recent trends, statistics and key findings
- Overview of European caselaw on children migration's access to justice
- CFJ-EN Coordinator – scene setting for the day

9.30 am – 11.00 am

Parallel thematic workshops – Mutual learning (*working titles*)

1. Hearing children's voices in European strategic litigation
2. One-stop-shops for children in migration
3. Access to justice for migrant children in uncertain times
4. Trauma-informed lawyering and restorative justice (tbc)

11.00 am – 11.30 pm

Break

11.30pm – 1.00 pm

Plenary session II – Children as agents of change

- Debate with young ambassadors
- Young People from DCI Greece & DCI Italy
- Ombudsperson from Italy (tbc)
- Ombudsperson from Greece (tbc)
- Chair of the European Network for Ombudspeople (tbc)

1.00pm – 2.30 pm

Lunch

2.30 pm – 3.30 pm

Plenary session III – Reimagining

- European Commission – DG Home (tbc)
- Council of Europe – Office of the Special Representative for Migrants and Refugees
- Professor in Sociology, Genova University
- Institute for Inspiring Children's future – Smarter Financing for children in migration (tbc)

3.30 pm – 4.00 pm

Closing plenary

- Lawyer from Greece and Council of Europe consultant – Conclusions of the seminar (tbc)
- CFJ-EN Vice-President – Conclusions and closing words

About the Organisers

The Child Friendly Justice European Network was launched in April 2019 by Defence for Children International Belgium (DCI-Belgium) as an informal Network. Its founding Members were the 7 European Sections of Defence for Children International, soon joined by other non-DCI organisations. In 2022, DCI Belgium signed a Framework Partnership Agreement with the EACEA (European Education and Culture Executive Agency) and the CFJ-EN became a fully operational formal Network. The CFJ-EN is established in Belgium through DCI-Belgium, which was created in 1991 under Belgian law with the aim of promoting children’s rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CFJ-EN is a European Network specialised on child friendly justice. Its Members believe it is imperative to ensure that children can access legal remedies and justice and that it is essential to adapt justice systems to the specificities of children, their particular needs and their vulnerabilities. They also believe that they need to coordinate their action across Europe to widen impact and harmonise practices for the benefits of children in contact with justice systems.

Defence for Children International Italy (DCI Italy) DCI Italy promotes, for and with children, a different world respectful of their rights. The organisation works so that children are finally recognised as persons and citizens who are entitled to rights. They lead analysis and research, raise awareness and provide trainings. They also have a role of reporter of violations to interrupt abuses and point out responsibilities. Moreover, they have a pro-active role and promote legal proposals to the government so that policies and laws are geared towards protecting the rights of children. They have specific expertise in juvenile justice, deprivation of liberty, procedural rights and children on the move.

Contact details

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