

CFJ-EN STRATEGY 2023 › 2025

Justice Starts with Children



CFJ-EN
Child Friendly Justice
European Network

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Foreword

We are very proud to present the first strategy of the Child Friendly Justice European Network for the next three years. This is a very important document as it will guide the action of the Network for the foreseeable future.

The Network has the firm intention to become a major actor on the European scene in order to participate in the improvement of justice systems and to make them much more child friendly and thus guarantee better access to justice for children.

Our four strategic priorities, strengthening children's agency, promoting quality practice, ensuring accountability and strengthening the network, will contribute to changing attitudes, legislation and practice in the field of child justice.

Now fully operational, with a highly experienced team and 19 members across 17 European countries, the Network is therefore fully equipped to pursue its objectives with great determination and commitment.

We look very much forward to working with all of our members, partners, stakeholders in the coming years.

Benoît van Keirsbilck

Chair

Nantina Tsekeri

Vice-Chair

Mariama Diallo

Coordinator

CFJ-EN STRATEGY (2023 › 2025)



I. The Child Friendly Justice Context in Europe

Countries in Europe have made significant efforts in recent years to conform their national justice system to child friendly justice principles. For the first time, the 2020 European Union (EU) Justice Scoreboard presented a consolidated overview of the measures taken by EU Member States for child friendly justice systems. Indeed the overview shows that almost all national authorities make some accommodation for children, introducing measures to make hearings more child friendly and to overcome the prevalent issue of repeated hearings of a child.

An extensive European legislative and policy framework provides for the protection of rights, the establishment of standards, the respect of principles and the implementation of the rights of children in contact with justice systems.¹ It is noteworthy to mention that both the EU and the Council of Europe (CoE) have launched their comprehensive Strategy on the Rights of the Child,² which dedicate a section to child friendly justice.

UN General Comment 24 on Children's rights in juvenile justice³ recognises that many developments have taken place since the last General Comment on this theme was published in 2007 through the promulgation of various resolutions and other guiding documents on violence against children, the knowledge about child and adolescent development, case law, but also negative trends relating to the minimum age of criminal responsibility and the persistent use of deprivation of liberty, as well as emerging issues, such as children recruited and exploited by non-State armed groups, or terrorist or violent extremist groups, and children in customary justice systems.

Overall, the following trends are observed:

- Progress in adapting justice systems to the rights and needs of children **is slow and uneven from one country to another**, thus efforts are fragmented and often lack visibility.
- There is a **lack of coordination** between professionals from different sectors that leads to a duplication of efforts.
- Many professionals involved in the justice system **lack specialised and practical training** focusing on children's rights and genuine communication with children; further, we observe a high turnover rate contrary to the need for consistency in practices.
- Across Europe, access to justice for children remains a **"journey filled with obstacles"** and a difficult, painful ordeal for the majority of children. When given a space to express their views and share their thoughts, these children often express a feeling of frustration and powerlessness.
- Around **2.5 million children participate in judicial proceedings** across the European Union every year, either affected by parental divorce or as victims of, or witnesses to, crime.⁴
- An estimated **one million children face criminal justice proceedings** in the European Union each year.⁵
- Justice proceedings are not sufficiently adapted to children's needs, thus contributing to their **re-traumatisation and re-victimisation**. Instead, children should be able to understand and trust the justice system, and feel confident in using it.⁶
- Across Council of Europe Member States, **deprivation of liberty** for children in contact with the law is still too generalised while children continue to be excluded from meaningful participation in proceedings.⁷

¹ These include, among others:

- [Directive 2016/800 on procedural guarantees for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings \(Procedural Safeguards for Children Directive\) \(2016\)](#)
 - [Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime \(Victim's Rights Directive\) \(2012\)](#)
 - [Council Regulation 4/2009/EC on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions and cooperation in matters relating to maintenance obligations \(2008\)](#)
 - [Communication COM/2017/0211 on the protection of children in migration](#)
 - [The Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice \(2011\)](#)
 - [The CoE Strategy on the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\)](#)
 - [The EU Strategy on the rights of the child \(2022-2024\)](#)
 - [The EU Strategy on victims' rights \(2020-2025\)](#)
 - [The Union of Equality: EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy \(2020-2025\)](#)
 - [The EU Gender Equality Strategy \(2020-2025\)](#)
 - [The EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child \(2017\)](#)
 - [The EU Guidelines on children and armed conflict \(2008\)](#)

² See [European Union Strategy on the Rights of the Child \(2022-2025\)](#) and [Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\)](#)

³ See [UN General Comment 24 on Children's rights in juvenile justice](#)

⁴ See [Fundamental Rights Agency, 2015, Child-friendly justice - Perspectives and experiences of children involved in judicial proceedings as victims, witnesses or parties in nine EU Member States](#)

⁵ [The EU Strategy on the rights of the child \(2022-2024\)](#)

⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/council-of-europe-strategy-for-the-rights-of-the-child-2022-2027-child/1680a5ef27>

⁷ [Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2022-2027](#)

While there are overall more than seven million children per year deprived of liberty, between 1.3 and 1.5 million children per year are deprived of their liberty based on a judicial or administrative decision.⁸

- 33% of European countries prosecute children above the minimum age of criminal responsibility **for offences committed while below the minimum age**. Also, **individual needs assessments** of children involved in criminal proceedings are not being conducted systematically across Europe.⁹
- Nearly three in four children between the ages of two and four regularly suffer **physical punishment and/or psychological violence** at the hands of parents and caregivers.¹⁰
- Demonstrating poor access to justice in cases of discrimination, the percentage of children and young adults who **reported or complained** about the most recent time they felt discriminated because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or immigrant background, and religion or religious belief in any area of life are extremely low and range from 11% (Roma) to 16% (Sub-Saharan African) among the questioned groups in a survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).¹¹
- According to FRA's research conducted in 2020, 15% of LGBTIQ¹² respondents aged 15-17 said they had experienced cyber harassment due to their sexual orientation but 89% of them did not report the last incident of discrimination anywhere.¹³

In 2021, a consortium of organisations involving several CFJ-EN members consulted 40 children to influence the 2022-2025 EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.¹⁴ When asked about how child friendly they perceived justice systems to be in Europe, children unequivocally expressed their feelings of injustice:

- > They shared that the professionals in contact with them often showed to be **"indifferent and insensible"** to their situation".
- > They felt that "they were **not worthy of interest or care**".
- > A recurrent theme identified by them was the **"very poor level of legal information"** that was provided to them but also to the community in general".
- > When asked about their priority issues, the main threat they identified was to their **physical integrity**, being afraid of "being physically hurt" by the professional interviewing them.
- > **Children from ethnic and minority groups** – including Roma children – are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and above all in detention.
- > **Children deprived of family support and migrant children** encounter obstacles in accessing justice and legal support throughout their journey and are often deprived of liberty in detention centres for long periods.

The field of child justice is in constant evolution, with emerging new challenges that children face on a daily basis, such as: climate change, the energy crisis, exposure to the digital environment, the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the migration crisis, political movements against women's rights, children's rights, migrant and refugee rights, etc. In particular, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in physical, psychological and sexual violence against children and exposed the vulnerability of child protection systems in times of crisis.¹⁵

These uncertain times contribute to putting children at risk of having their rights violated and might hinder their access to justice and legal remedies.

It also means that professionals across Europe need to better understand how children are affected, what is their experience of trauma, and how we can ensure a safe and secure environment for them when accessing justice.

This is what CFJ-EN members aim to achieve.

⁸ See [UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty \(2019\)](#), p. IX and pp.260-261

⁹ See Terre des hommes, Report "Children in Contact with the Law in Europe: Trends and Opportunities", 2021

¹⁰ See [Global status report on preventing violence against children, UNICEF/WHO, 2020](#)

¹¹ See, among others, [Second European Union minorities and discrimination survey, FRA, 2016](#)

¹² LGBTIQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer people

¹³ See [A long way to go for LGBTI equality, FRA, 2020](#)

¹⁴ http://tdh-europe.org/upload/document/7293/JUST_with_Children_Policy_Brief_EC_Strategy_Child_Rights.pdf

¹⁵ See [CoE Strategy on the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\)](#)

II. Introducing the CFJ-EN Network

Background

The CFJ-EN was created in April 2019 as an informal Network by Defence for Children International Belgium (DCI-Belgium), an association 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. Its founding members were the European Sections of Defence for Children International, which were soon joined by other child rights and child justice organisations across Europe.

The idea to set up a European Network specialised on child friendly justice came as a direct response to the numerous observations and needs assessments made by various lead European organisations active in the field of child friendly justice.

In 2022, thanks to the financial support of the European Commission through an Operating Grant, the CFJ-EN was formally launched as a fully operational Network.

Vision, Mission, Objectives

The CFJ-EN envisages a world in which justice systems ensure the realisation of all children's rights and where children in Europe have access to age appropriate, inclusive, and diligent services, and practitioners are equipped to implement child friendly justice. This vision is grounded in the principles and rights enshrined in international standards. The mission of the CFJ-EN is to ensure that justice systems are adapted to the specificities of children: their particular needs, their capacities and their vulnerabilities.

The CFJ-EN Network has been set up to address the above-mentioned gaps and needs, to offer a structured collaborative framework to support the implementation of key European strategies and policies relating to child friendly justice, to reinforce and coordinate efforts among European civil society actors, to help give them more visibility and leverage, and, above all, to allow children to actively participate in these improvements by sharing their experience and expectations.

In 2022, the Council of Europe included the CFJ-EN in the list of key stakeholders involved in implementing its Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

Composition / Geographical Scope

CFJ-EN Membership is open to any not-for-profit organisation, academic institution, professional network, private organisation, international organisation and individual expert based in Europe, with an interest and experience in child justice and children's rights.

The CFJ-EN offers its members the opportunity to:

- Be informed about child friendly justice trends and opportunities
- Be involved in advocacy strategies and initiatives
- Take part in regional projects and large-scale programmes
- Increase the visibility of members' activities
- Be informed on the latest research in the field
- Foster information exchange and sharing of experience and expertise

As of October 2022, the CFJ-EN is composed of 19 member organisations established across 17 European countries (EU and non-EU). Our members develop numerous actions and initiatives in the field of children's rights and child justice and all have in common a commitment to working towards justice systems that take children's needs and rights fully into consideration. By 2025 the Network aims to include members from most EU countries.





Target Groups

- Children in contact with the justice system:** for example, children involved in and/or affected by criminal, civil and administrative proceedings. This includes children who are victims and/or witnesses, children who committed or are alleged to have committed an offence, children involved in civil and administrative proceedings (family separation, parental abduction, adoption, etc.), children in migration and children in need of accessing a legal remedy to challenge decisions violating their rights. This target group indirectly benefits from the training, advocacy, awareness-raising activities conducted by CFJ-EN members.
- CFJ-EN Members and their staff:** they benefit directly from all activities run by the Network (advocacy, awareness-raising, capacity building, conferences, seminars, dissemination of research findings, etc.).
- Children and young people involved in the CFJ-EN Child Advisory Boards:** this target group is composed of a mixed and diverse group of children aged 12-18 and youth aged 19-24, with direct experience or a special interest with one of CFJ-EN member's justice systems. They are led by CFJ-EN Members in European countries. These groups act as a Governance body for the Network.
- Regional and national-level policy makers and practitioners:** this group includes representatives from regional institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe, etc.) and from national institutions (ministry representatives, ombudspersons, lawyers, judiciary and other justice practitioners, child protection authorities, etc). It also includes representatives from professional training schools (bar associations, school for magistrates, etc.) This target group directly benefits from the advocacy, networking, and awareness-raising activities conducted by the Network.
- European Alliances and Networks defending children's rights and in particular their access to justice.** This includes various non-state public actors for child justice, such as [Child Helpline international](#), [Child Rights Information Network \(CRIN\)](#), the [Global Initiative on Justice with Children](#), the [Global Network for Public Interest Law \(PILnet\)](#), [European Forum for Restorative Justice \(EFRJ\)](#), [European Guardianship Network](#), the [European Justice Training Network \(EJTN\)](#), [European Network of Ombudsperson for Children \(ENOC\)](#), [European Training Platform \(ETP\)](#), [Inclusion Europe](#), [Missing Children Europe](#), and [Victim Support Europe](#), to mention a few.

Thematic Scope

Children come into contact with the justice system in many different ways. Children can be involved in family matters such as divorce or adoption proceedings, they can face administrative justice for nationality or immigration issues, or criminal justice as victims, witnesses, suspects and/or accused of crimes. They may also need to reach out to the justice system seeking for remedies when their rights are not fully respected.

For this reason, the CFJ-EN has chosen to adopt a holistic approach by addressing all the situations in which children can find themselves in. This line of action entails a broad thematic scope, namely: children involved in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings.

In line with the CoE Guidelines on Child-Friendly Justice, our scope is not only limited to judicial proceedings but to all situations in which children are likely to be, for whatever reason and in whatever capacity, brought into contact with all competent bodies and services involved in implementing criminal, civil or administrative law.

In addition, the CFJ-EN and its members are also active in protecting the rights of children in the area of crime prevention and rehabilitation. The work of the CFJ-EN thus aims at ensuring that all children can access justice and legal remedies at every stage.

Guiding Principles

Child friendly justice has its sources in international law, mainly in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In addition, there is a multitude of legal norms and instruments (hard law), as well as guidelines, principles, standards and case law (soft law) developed by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union that relate to child friendly justice.

The work of the CFJ-EN is therefore enshrined in the CRC, including in the international standards and principles applicable to child friendly justice, and in particular in the fundamental principles of dignity, protection from discrimination, rule of law, best interests of the child, and child participation.

In Europe, the Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child friendly Justice are a very important instrument where these principles are explained.

The Network commits to promoting better implementation of fundamental rights of children and child friendly justice in line in particular with:

- The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights
- The EU acquis on children's rights, in particular Directive 2016/800 on procedural safeguards for children and Directive 2012/29/EU on victim's rights
- The 2021 EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child
- The CoE Strategy on the Rights of the Child
- The CoE Guidelines on Child Friendly Justice

Last but not least, the CFJ-EN Network also commits to being consistent with principles and standards of gender equality and adolescent development.

III. CFJ-EN Strategic Priorities

STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S AGENCY



In many countries in Europe, being in contact with the justice system is still difficult. Children and young people know better than anyone what should change in the system so that it is easier for them, at any age. That's why we want them to have a say.

- Promoting meaningful and inclusive participation of children and young people
- Practitioners working with children understand the importance of child participation

PROMOTING QUALITY OF PRACTICE

When professionals listen to children, and make sure their needs are met, children feel safe and respected, and that any decisions that are made are fairer. We want to help them learn how to work with children and how to communicate with them.



- Increasing capacities of legal and non-legal practitioners who work with children
- Sharing knowledge and expertise across Europe on child friendly justice

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

Often there are laws and recommendations for justice systems to take better care of children already in place, but they are not respected because there is not enough money or enough motivation to enforce them. We want to make sure everything is in place for child friendly justice.



- Informing European policy makers and making them aware of inspiring practices
- Informing national policy makers and making them aware of latest developments in child friendly justice

NETWORK STRENGTHENING



Many community members want to help children have better access to justice. They need to work together, share their skills and information, and learn from each other. We want to help them meet, talk and build projects.

- Strengthening the capacities of the Network to communicate on and promote child friendly justice
- Mobilising support and fostering collaborations across Europe towards effective access to justice for children

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S AGENCY



When in contact with the justice system, children are thrown into an intimidating world they often do not understand. Whether they are victims, witnesses, suspects, accused and/or convicted, in migration, or whether they are seeking legal remedies, too often children are still not given the space to express themselves. However, children are skilled at describing the problems that they face, how policies affect them and testifying about how laws can be improved. When children are granted the space to express their views and opinions, they become agents of change. On the other hand, practitioners working with children should also understand what meaningful participation means in practice, what listening to children really entails, and how important it is to treat them fairly within the justice systems.

For these reasons, the CFJ-EN will contribute to ensuring the implementation of the right to participation of children and young people.

To this end, we will work to build justice systems in Europe where:

Progress is made towards promoting the meaningful and inclusive participation of children and young people in contact with justice systems, taking into account the diversity of backgrounds and experiences

We will do this by:

- Establishing inclusive child participation mechanisms where children and young people are given the space to share their views and express their opinions on child friendly justice
- Raising awareness among children and young people on the right to participation and on the role of children as rights holders in justice proceedings
- Creating spaces of exchange between children and adults to influence better practices in child friendly justice
- Strengthening the agency of children and young people to become advocates and influence policies and legislation

Practitioners working with children understand the importance of meaningful participation of children when in contact with justice systems

We will do this by:

- Building the capacities of CFJ-EN Members to train practitioners on child participation
- Developing and promoting train the trainer methodologies on child participation for legal and non-legal professionals working with children
- Raising awareness among legal and non-legal practitioners about the role of children as rights holders in justice proceedings

Relevant Key indicators: Evidence that feedback / inputs from children have effectively fed into the network's strategy/direction/activities; % members of the Child Advisory Board with experience of the justice system; consultation mechanisms established and utilised; # of Child Justice Caravans delivered

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

PROMOTING QUALITY OF PRACTICE



Children accessing legal remedies and/or justice will likely feel that they are treated fairly when they enter in contact with legal and non-legal practitioners who understand them, hear their views, assess their needs, and use child friendly communication. These soft skills are as essential as hard skills about legislations and policies. Quality of practice can therefore be enhanced by investing in better equipping practitioners in contact with children with knowledge and skills related to child friendly justice.

At the CFJ-EN, we aim to become a resource centre for any practitioner in Europe who wishes to be informed about the latest news, policies, legislation and practices in place in the area of child friendly justice.

To this end, we will work to build justice systems in Europe where:

• The capacities of legal practitioners working with children are increased

We will do this by:

- Fostering exchanges with legal and non-legal professionals involved in justice systems
- Developing, updating and/or disseminating training resources for legal and non-legal practitioners involved in the civil, administrative and criminal justice systems
- Providing thematic support to CFJ-EN Members, by giving direction and guidance on child friendly justice
- Building the capacities of CFJ-EN Members to be involved in strategic litigation in cases involving children
- Supporting CFJ-EN members to deliver trainings for practitioners on child friendly justice

• Sharing knowledge and expertise on child friendly justice with practitioners, academia and professional networks across Europe

We will do this by:

- Compiling and disseminating legal resources for practitioners on child friendly justice
- Fostering mutual learning by creating online and face-to-face spaces for exchange of knowledge (webinars, annual seminars, study visits)
- Formalising strategic partnerships with European Networks and Alliances specialised in professional training, as well as with Children's Rights Observatories
- Compiling and disseminating standards and recommendations applicable to child friendly justice

Relevant Key indicators: # of collaborations / joint actions implemented with other networks and/or academia; # of knowledge documents produced by the network and its members; # of working groups in which the CFJ-EN is a member and contributor

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY



In Europe, significant progress has been made to ensure policies, legislations and strategies recognising the importance of protecting the rights of children in contact with civil, administrative and criminal justice systems. Both the European Union and the Council of Europe Strategies on the Rights of the Child dedicate a specific thematic priority on child friendly justice. European policies and strategies are indeed the cornerstone to ensuring that the rights of all children can be upheld when they require accessing legal remedies and/or justice. However, justice systems too often still fail to deliver child friendly justice, in particular for children from marginalised groups. It is therefore key to work towards evolving European laws and strategies for better implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and child friendly justice principles.

At the CFJ-EN, we aim to become a lead influencer on child friendly justice, and to encourage policy makers to commit resources and legal changes to ensure that justice systems are child friendly.

To this end, we will work to build justice systems in Europe where:

◉ EU policy makers are informed and aware of inspiring practices in child friendly justice

We will do this by:

- Calling on key European decision makers at the European Union and the Council of Europe to uphold respect of child friendly justice principles and standards
- Building synergies with other European Network and Alliances to ensure that the protection of the rights of children involved in justice systems are included when advocating for children's rights in Europe
- Contributing to improving data collection about the situation of children in contact with justice systems by updating and disseminating leading thematic research in the area of child friendly justice
- Increasing the capacities of our members to advocate for child friendly justice at European level

◉ National policy makers are informed and aware of the latest developments in child friendly justice

We will do this by:

- Calling on national decision makers to uphold respect of child friendly justice principles and standards
- Contributing to improving data collection about the situation of children in contact with justice systems by updating and disseminating leading thematic research in the area of child friendly justice
- Developing, updating and/or disseminating thematic resources for policy makers on child friendly justice

Relevant Key indicators: # of EU-level advocacy events conducted; Evidence of policy documents the Network has developed and/or endorsed; Development and implementation of an Advocacy Strategy

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

NETWORK STRENGTHENING



Our Strategic Objectives targeting children, professionals, and institutions cannot be achieved without investing in building a strong, operational and sustainable European Network. Ensuring stable human and financial resources is therefore a necessary priority to achieve the above-mentioned results, as well as nurturing effective partnerships with donors, alliances and networks, academia and individual experts.

At the CFJ-EN, we aim to gain traction year on year to ensure that children in contact with the justice system have better experiences and their rights are promoted, respected, and fulfilled across Europe.

To this end, we will work to build justice systems in Europe where:

🔗 **Capabilities of the CFJ-EN to communicate on and promote child friendly justice are sustained to ensure that children have effective access to justice**

We will do this by:

- Generating a safe space within the Network for exchanges and discussions on specific issues and cases involving children
- Keeping abreast of latest developments in child friendly justice and sharing this information through a dynamic social media presence, annual seminars and participation in key conferences and seminars
- Identifying and disseminating learning and development materials and opportunities for CFJ-EN Staff and Members

🔗 **The CFJ-EN is expanded to most EU countries so that children have better experiences with justice systems in their country**

We will do this by:

- Ensuring a sustainable collaboration with European institutions and funding bodies
- Inspiring private and institutional donors to commit funding to building systems where children can have effective access to child friendly justice
- Attracting civil society organisations, academia, and individual experts active in the field of child friendly justice across Europe to share their expertise with the Network

Relevant Key indicators: # number of toolkits/resources developed by its members and disseminated to a larger audience; # number of events organised by the Network; % increase in social media engagement; # number of CFJ newsletters produced

IV. CFJ-EN Strategies of Intervention

To achieve its Strategic Objectives, the CFJ-EN commits to adopting the following interdependent while complementary strategies of intervention:



European and National-level Advocacy

The CFJ-EN Operational Team and its members will develop strategic collaborations and partnerships with key policy-makers at European and national level to engage and influence relevant European policy & legislative processes in relation to children's access to justice.

This strategy will include children's advocacy, i.e., **collecting and sharing views and opinions of children and youth**, empowering them to understand their rights and make informed decisions on matters that influence their lives.



Capacity Building

Adopting a specific train the trainer methodology: the CFJ-EN interventions will aim at developing, consolidating, and/or updating specialised training material rolled out by our members, in order to build the skills and competencies of legal and non-legal professionals working with children.





Awareness-raising

The Operational Team and CFJ-EN members will contribute to the development and support the dissemination of awareness-raising material on child friendly justice, in particular on the rights of children in contact with the justice system.

With the support of the Child Advisory Boards present in members countries, child-led awareness-raising material will be produced to make information accessible to children themselves but also to professionals working with children.



Thematic Research

Thematic research will be conducted to support data collection and evidence-generation in relation to under researched areas, such as ages of criminal responsibility, deprivation of liberty and its alternatives, children from minorities, children with disabilities and LGBTI+ children. The research shall include whenever possible comparative elements to give a Europe-wide picture and understanding of the state of affairs.



Alliance Building

The CFJ-EN strongly believes that in order to achieve child friendly justice in Europe, strategic partnerships with other European networks, alliances, and platforms working with children must be an integral part of the Network's approach and strategy.

At international level, partnerships will be consolidated with platforms and initiatives advocating for child justice globally, such as the Global Initiative on Justice with Children, the Pathfinders Justice for Children, Justice for All Initiative, Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), Child Helpline international.

At European level, partnerships will be sought and/or consolidated with the EU Network on Children's Rights, the EU Platform on Child Participation and the EU Victim's Rights Platform. The CFJ-EN will be invited to share its expertise within CoE Working Groups, Committees and projects in relation to the implementation of the CoE Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

In addition, partnerships with other sister networks and alliances will be formalised with, among others, the [European Forum for Restorative Justice \(EFRJ\)](#), [European Guardianship Network](#), the [European Justice Training Network \(EJTN\)](#), [European Network of Ombudsperson for Children \(ENOC\)](#), [European Training Platform \(ETP\)](#), [Inclusion Europe](#), [Missing Children Europe](#), and [Victim Support Europe](#).

At national levels, CFJ-EN members will be actively supported to engage with national-level stakeholders and integrate strategic decision-making platforms. In particular, the capacities of our members will be strengthened to lead national-level partnerships in the area of child justice so as to further disseminate principles and set standards of child friendly justice at national level.



Membership Development and Strengthening

The CFJ-EN membership will be strengthened and developed with the inclusion of new categories of members covering a larger geographical scope in Europe. This strategy of intervention will incorporate a set of standards, aiming at supporting mutual learning among European organisations actively engaged in child justice.

V. Critical Success Factors

In order for the CFJ-EN to achieve its mission, the following critical success factors are considered as key elements of the current Strategic Plan:



Children as Agents of Change

The governance of the CFJ-EN will integrate children's participation and welcome their contributions in the strategic processes run by the Network, for example with the creation of CFJ-EN Child Advisory Boards. Children and young people aged 12-24 with direct experience of or a special interest in justice systems, accompanied by CFJ-EN members, will be involved in CFJ-EN governance-related decisions and invited to provide inputs on capacity building, awareness-raising and advocacy material aimed at professionals working with children in justice settings.



Agility in Action

Ensuring that the Network and its members are able to tackle emerging and evolving challenges affecting children in contact with the justice systems. Global challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the impact of climate change, the energy crisis, movement of children across Europe, among others, dramatically impacted children in recent years and clearly highlight the urgency to adopt approaches which take into account the possibility of having to adjust to external circumstances and changes.



Innovative Approach

The CFJ-EN aims to be forward-thinking and tackle whenever possible unresearched or under-researched themes affecting children in contact with justice systems. Adopting an innovative approach will ensure the Network remains dynamic in addressing matters related to, for example, digital justice and intersectionality. The Network will aim to cultivate a learning culture, investigating and/or investing in novel and promising approaches, experimenting and ensuring feedback loops to adjust and learn quickly.



Sustainably Equipped

The stability and sustainability of the Network is of paramount importance for our members to successfully promote the application of child friendly justice principles across Europe. This is why the CFJ-EN aims at establishing strong partnerships with key actors and stakeholders.

Thanks to a dynamic resource mobilisation strategy, the Network will work to enter in strategic partnership with different donors and funding bodies, thus guaranteeing a diversification of funding sources which will allow us to secure the resources and freedom of action necessary to achieve our Strategic Objectives in the long-term.



Visibility of Action

The CFJ-EN aims to advance the rights of children in contact with justice systems. Visibility of action is an integral component of its intervention and to succeed, capacity building, advocacy, and awareness-raising must be associated with a solid and lively external communication approach.

By making our actions visible, we will contribute to making policy makers and practitioners more accountable towards children. Our main tool to achieve this will be: social media activity, newsletters, knowledge sharing about current affairs affecting children in contact with justice systems, and participation in large-scale targeted thematic events organised by the CFJ-EN, European institutions, as well as the civil society.

VI. Monitoring & Evaluation



Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Alongside the official launch of the CFJ-EN in 2022 comes a commitment within its members to ensure the Network carefully and effectively tracks the progress made towards the members' overall mission and goals. This is not only a good practice to enable the Network to understand its impact and course-correct whenever necessary to meet specific objectives; it is also crucial in helping the Network document and highlight its added value, particularly in its early years of operation when it seeks to establish itself as a credible partner and centre of expertise.

The Network is committed to collecting high quality data that is reliable, verified, and that offers actionable insights into the progress being measured. To this end, the Network will rely on a detailed M&E Framework, grounded in the following key principles: **Voice and inclusion, Appropriateness, Triangulation, Contribution.**

The M&E Framework includes a set of key performance indicators capturing the Network's **main areas of interventions**: advocacy, capacity building, membership development, external partnerships and communication. The following **six key operational objectives will be monitored**:

- 1 **Effectiveness**: evidence that the Network has developed operational capacity, including relevant systems and processes
- 2 **Network's visibility**: raising the profile and knowledge of the Network's existence among relevant audiences, helping to position CFJ-EN as a convenor and source of information on CFJ
- 3 **Child participation**: supporting and empowering children to be meaningfully consulted and involved in shaping the direction of the Network, and provide feedback on activities and initiatives
- 4 **Capacity strengthening of members**: promoting the development and professionalisation of members, responding to trends, collective intelligence of the Network and knowledge gaps
- 5 **Influence**: raising awareness of the importance and relevance of child friendly justice among targeted audiences and stakeholders, lobbying policy-makers for due consideration and investment in CFJ across Europe
- 6 **Generation of knowledge**: the capacity of the Network to position itself as an authority on CFJ, producing and sharing up-to-date information, guidance and expertise with relevant partners and stakeholders



Governance & Monitoring Progress

In its day-to-day operation, the CFJ-EN will rely on governance structures allowing regular and periodic review of progress, mainly to ensure that the Network remains aligned with its strategic priorities as set out in the present document, but also to address any evolving situation in an agile and dynamic manner. The governance structures are the following:

The **General Assembly (GA)** determines the general policies and undertakes all important decisions, including election and recalling of the Steering Committee members, the approval of the budget, the approval of the strategy and the acceptance and exclusion of members of the Network. It is the democratic heart of the Network where a fair and equal representation of each member's voices is ensured all full members have a voting right in the GA.

The **Steering Committee (SC)** acts as the executive body of the Network in charge of the orientations and strategies that the GA will adopt. It determines policy recommendations for the Network, the cross-cutting themes to be addressed, the Strategy to be pursued. All its decisions are shared in a transparent way. The Network is chaired by a Chair and a Vice-Chair, both elected by the GA.

The **Operational Team** (OT) is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the Strategy, implements the guidelines decided by the SC with approval of the GA. The OT is composed of eight staff members: one Coordinator (full-time), one Communication Officer (part-time), one Advocacy Officer (part-time), one Financial and Administrative Officer (part-time), one Fundraising Officer (part-time), one Quality & Accountability Officer (part-time) and two interns (full-time).

The governance of the CFJ-EN has also been thought to fully integrate children's participation and welcome their contributions. Children and young people aged 12-24, supported by CFJ-EN members, will be involved in CFJ-EN governance-related decisions and be invited to provide inputs on capacity building, awareness-raising and advocacy material.



Periodic Reviews

The current Strategic Plan will be subject to a mid-term review in order to allow the necessary adjustments, revisions and adaptations to be made if external and internal conditions have impacted the pre-defined strategic objectives.



Learning and Development

CFJ-EN structures and governance model include dedicated moments and spaces to assess and reflect on whether the Network is making progress towards its objectives.

Learning will be based on: exchanging knowledge, promoting inspiring practices in monitoring and evaluation, research and pilot projects, building on the experience of children to inform the system and seek improvements, and on promoting a culture of innovation to find better ways to deliver a just and equitable justice for children.

With this in mind, the key learning questions that the CFJ-EN will seek to answer include:

- 1 How do the established governance, management and collective decision-making processes effectively contribute to improving children's access to justice?
- 2 How is the Network's collective intelligence best used to ensure that children in contact with justice systems have better experiences and their rights are promoted, respected and fulfilled in Europe?
- 3 How do children's rights and experiences of justice differ based on gender, nationality, status, geography and what gaps and challenges prevail?

For more information or any questions related to the CFJ-EN, please contact:

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The CFJ-EN is part of the legal entity and enjoys the support of:



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