

CFJ-EN Annual Seminar 2024

Climate (in)justice for children - How Climate Change Affects Children's Access to Justice

CONCEPT NOTE

Practical details

Working title of the event	Climate (in)justice for children - How climate change affects Children's Access to Justice
Date	Thursday 10 October 2024 - Friday 11 October 2024
Location	Brussels
Language of the seminar	English
Seminar Format	In-person event
Expected participants	Approx. 100 people

General Context

In a world navigating unprecedented challenges, the vulnerabilities of children have become increasingly apparent from economic, geopolitical, and health crises. The confluence of these adversities intersects with the overarching threat of climate change, as outlined in the United Nations 2030 agenda. This complex scenario not only magnifies the vulnerability of children but also places an immense burden on justice systems initially designed to safeguard their well-being. The multifaceted crises underscore the imperative to scrutinise the intricate relationship between all children's human rights, including environmental rights, the climate crisis, and the resilience of justice mechanisms for children.

In Europe, all countries are exposed to adverse impacts of climate change, notably affecting their children and youth, emphasising the critical need to align national climate action ambitions with comprehensive child justice reforms. While the UN Committee on the Rights issued in 2023 its General Comment 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change and is currently developing General Comment 27 on access to justice and remedies for children, time seems opportune to integrate child justice into the broader agendas of international and European institutions, ensuring a holistic and synergistic approach to addressing the challenges faced by children in the wake of global crises, including:

- Guaranteeing access to justice for children in the climate crisis context with a specific focus on Strategic Climate Litigation and Right to Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly.
- Examining how climate change puts structural pressure on child justice systems

For its 2024 Annual Seminar, in close partnership with its members Terre des hommes Foundation (Tdh) and CICS.NOVA FCSH, the CFJ-EN aims to bring attention to the diverse situations and challenges children encounter due to the impacts of climate change while seeking access to justice

and legal remedies¹. The purpose of the Annual Seminar is to advocate for a transformation of justice systems based on the next generation needs and rights to survive the consequences of climate change. It is organised in Preparation of the upcoming World Congress on Justice with Children which will be organised by the Global Initiative on Justice with Children in June 2025 in Madrid, and its builds on the recommendations formulated in [Tdh's report](#) on "Climate in-justice for children: How climate crisis affects access to justice and children's rights", published in October 2023 in partnership with the Global Initiative on Justice with Children,

General and Specific Objectives

The **General Objective** of the Annual Seminar is to **transform General Comment 26 on children's rights and the environment in practice, by promoting the human rights of children affected by the consequences of climate change** and generate opportunities for collaborations among national and regional stakeholders to guarantee that these children can effectively access justice in Europe. To serve as a catalyst for collaboration, the Seminar aims to provide a platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and the identification of actionable strategies to strengthen child justice in context of climate change.

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

1. Assess the **multifaced impact of climate change** on child justice systems, considering legal, social and environmental dimensions
2. Facilitate in depth discussions on **impact litigation strategies** aimed at safeguarding the environmental rights of children on empowering children to access justice.
3. Address the critical issue of **non-criminalisation of children's rights to free assembly**, particularly in the context of climate related activism
4. Examine the **potential impact of climate change on children in contact with justice systems**, emphasising preventive and adaptive measures.
5. Explore **innovative approaches** to enhance access to justice for children in environmental matters, emphasising child participation.

Lead Questions that the Seminar aims to address

1. What is the **state of play** in relation to climate change and its impact on child justice systems and what responses can be formulated? How can **child friendly standards** be applied in this context?
2. How can we enhance a **legal framework** to ensure climate justice for children, considering their distinctive needs in environmental matters?
3. In what ways does climate change influence **patterns of crimes committed by children or affecting children victims/witnesses**? How can justice systems evolve to address these changes?
4. How can **impact litigation** be employed as a tool for environmental rights of children globally?
5. How does ensuring access to justice in the face of climate change go beyond just environmental concerns and involve **ethical, legal and political aspects**?
6. What **policy and procedural adaptations** are needed in child justice systems to effectively respond to the consequences of climate change?

¹ See : *Climate in-justice for children: How climate crisis affects access to justice and children's rights*. Policy Brief - Terre des hommes – 2023
<https://tdh.rokka.io/dynamic/noop/70ffa81b0c6cbf77f622e20ef439fc4ae1df53d6/climate-in-justice-2023-final-ii.pdf>

7. To what extent **non-discrimination approaches and diversity** are implemented and respected for children affected by environmental degradation and climate change?

Expected Results

1. Increased awareness of the nuanced challenge at the intersection of child justice, environmental rights and the climate crisis
2. Increased awareness of professionals on child friendly justice standards that need to apply to children impacted by climate change
3. Identification of collaborative opportunities among experts, authorities, and civil society to address global challenges impacting children
4. Strategies are identified for children and young people to work hand-in-hand with experts, authorities, and civil society, collectively tackling global challenges that impact their lives
5. Seeds are planted for regional collaborations that will enable actors to improve their practice pertaining to access to justice for children impacted by climate change

Thematic Workshops

Following on the model used during previous CFJ-EN Annual Seminars, the purpose of the thematic workshops is to explore several topics linked to the Seminar's main theme. The workshops will be held in line with the following four seminar themes which should address the lead questions mentioned above:

- 1 / Impact Litigation and Children's Access to Justice
- 2 / Children's Right to Free Assembly
- 3 / Climate Change and Child Justice Systems
- 4 / Climate Change and Crimes committed by or affecting children

Expected participants

- Members of the Child Friendly Justice European Network
- Children and Young persons with experience with the justice system and affected by environmental issues
- Representatives of European and Regional institutions
- Representatives of national public institutions
- Practitioners and academia working in the field of Law, social work, sociology and environmental issues
- Representatives of Regional Alliances and European and Global Networks working in the field of child justice and climate change

Indicative Agenda

Thursday, 10th October 2024

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| 9.00 am – 17.30 pm | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opening Plenary- Thematic Plenary sessions- Workshop sessions |
| 8.00pm – 11.00 pm | Social Event |

Friday, 11th October 2024

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| 9.00 am – 13.00 pm | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Thematic Plenary sessions- Workshop sessions- Closing Plenary |
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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.

Terre des hommes (Tdh), founded in 1960, is the leading Swiss child relief organisation. Tdh is committed to bringing meaningful and lasting change to the lives of children and youth, especially to those most exposed to risks by providing essential services, assistance and training. Tdh strives to ensure the effective application of children's rights as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments related to justice for children. Through the **Global Initiative Justice with Children** Tdh has contributed to the development of an initiative that addresses the most current issues related to the rights of children and adolescents in contact and/or conflict with justice systems.

CICS.NOVA FCSH - Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences is a public research unit based in NOVA School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Lisbon, Portugal, with four regional poles built on a multiple scales network. CICS.NOVA FCSH's mission is to undertake high quality and innovative interdisciplinary research for critical thinking in social sciences and policymaking. The research team has extensive experience in bringing together the resources and the expertise of community-based organisations, State entities and researchers to address issues concerning children rights, youth justice practice and policy, child friendly justice and children deprived of their liberty.



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.

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