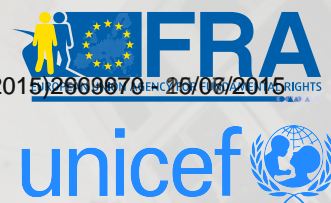


PRIORITIZING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL CHILDREN IN EUROPE AND BEYOND

WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT CAN BE DONE

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POLICY DISCUSSION DRAFT AGENDA

BRUSSELS | 3 JUNE 2015, VENUE TBC

Co-organized by UNICEF and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in partnership with the European Parliament Intergroup on Children's Rights.

Time	Topic	Speakers
9:00—9:10	Opening Remarks	Ms. Caterina Chinnici, Member of the European Parliament & Co-chair of the European Parliament Intergroup on Children's Rights
9:10—9:20	Key Note Address: Children's Access to Justice: a matter of rights, rule of law and inclusive development	Ms. Susan Bissell, UNICEF, Associate Director, Chief of Child Protection
Highlights of newly released evidence on children's access to justice, Chair: Ms. Caterina Chinnici, Member of the European Parliament & Co-chair of the European Parliament Intergroup on Children's Rights		
9:20—10:00	Main findings of the study on Children's Involvement in Judicial Proceedings in the EU (DG Just)	Ms. Ursula Kilkelly, independent expert
	Main findings of the research on child participation in criminal and civil judicial proceedings in 10 EU Member States (professionals' views)	Ms. Astrid Podsiadlowski, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Head of Sector Rights of the Child, Equality and Citizens' Rights Department
	Main findings of the Research Study on Children's Equitable Access to Justice in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Ms. Anne Grandjean, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Regional Child Protection Specialist
	Video: Access to Justice for Children with mental disabilities in Bulgaria – produced by UNICEF and the Mental Disability Advocacy Centre	
Debate: The way forward – Implications for EU's policies and programming, Chair/Moderator: TBC		
10:00—10:20	Testimonies: Reaching out to the most vulnerable children and supporting them in seeking redress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mr. Benoit Van Keirsbilck, Defence for Children International, President and Director for BelgiumMr. Oliver Lewis, Mental Disability Advocacy Centre, Director (TBC)
10:20—10:45	Coffee break	
10:45—12:15	Moderated Debate <ul style="list-style-type: none">What could be the measures taken by the EU to enhance children's access to justice?How can access to justice for children become an integral part of governance and rule of law reforms in the EU and neighbouring countries?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ms. Sabina Klaneček, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of SloveniaMr. Tam Baillie, Children's ombudsperson and ENOC ChairMr. Bragi Guðbrandsson, Chair of the Council of Europe Lanzarote Committee (TBC)EEAS and/or DG Near (TBC)Chair of DROIPEN - Council (TBC)DG Justice (TBC)EP Member (TBC)
12:15—12:25	Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights/ UNICEF (TBC)
12:25—12:30	Closing Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Member of the European Parliament (TBC)

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CONFERENCE CONCEPT NOTE

Co-organized by UNICEF and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in partnership with the European Parliament Intergroup on Children's Rights.

Access to justice is a fundamental human right in itself; but it is also an enabling right empowering children to realise the rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Access to justice is also central to good governance, sustainable and inclusive development and the rule of law. As stated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'for rights to have meaning, effective remedies must be available to redress violations... (...)':

Children in Europe and neighbouring countries continue to have their rights violated, including their right to health, to education and to be protected from violence. Yet, only a fraction of children have access to a fair, timely and effective remedy - in other words, very few have access to justice.

Although much progress has taken place in the recent years, especially through the introduction of child-friendly court procedures in many countries, day-to-day practice often does not fully comply with international and European standards. While extensive resources are invested by national governments, the EU and other partners to strengthen the rule of law and to reform the justice system, only few are devoted explicitly to ensure access to justice for children. Justice systems that are not adapted risk victimising children for a second time, doing more harm than providing redress. The most vulnerable children suffer disproportionately. Access to justice for children is also negatively affected by social norms that still make it difficult for children to initiate legal action and seek redress on their own behalf.

Recent evidence produced by the European Commission, the EU Agency for Fundamental rights (FRA) and UNICEF shows that tailored and targeted measures adapted to children's age, maturity and evolving capacities are needed to ensure that all children in contact with the justice system, whether as victims, suspects, witnesses or parties to any legal proceedings, are protected and assisted in claiming their rights. Evidence also shows that measures are needed to tackle social norms that tolerate violence against children and make it challenging for children to seek and obtain redress.

Policy makers and practitioners from Europe and beyond are invited to discuss the following key questions:

What do we know about children in contact with justice systems in EU Members States?
How do children experience access to justice in enlargement and Eastern neighbourhood countries?
What has been tried and what works in assisting the most vulnerable children in claiming their rights?
What are the most common obstacles facing children, and how can child-specific measures become an integral part of governance and rule of law reforms in the EU and neighbouring countries?

For questions please contact: Anne Grandjean at agrandjean@unicef.org; Michaela Bauer at mbauer@unicef.org or Monica Gutierrez at Monica.Gutierrez@fra.europa.eu