

## RULES OF PROCEDURE

### EU Network for Children's Rights

(European Commission informal special group no. S22900)

#### **1. Role and mandate of the Network**

The set-up of the EU Network for Children's Rights (hereafter: 'the Network') was announced in the [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#), adopted on 24 March 2021. The Network builds on the existing [European Commission informal Expert Group on the Rights of the Child](#), which provides the Commission with advice and expertise on policy and legislative initiatives.

The Network will serve as a platform to enhance and strengthen the dialogue among the Member States and with the Commission and other stakeholders (international organisations, civil society organisations, children – as affiliated to the future EU Children's Participation Platform, etc.). In particular, the Network will allow for a stronger mutual learning and exchange of good practices among key actors on child rights, and will thus contribute to the implementation of the EU Strategy on the rights of the child at EU and national level.

The Network's overall objective will be to boost the exchange of information among the members of the Network, empower the members to play a more prominent role in their respective constituency, foster the exchange of good practices and dialogue on promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

#### **2. Qualification as 'informal special group'**

The Network is defined as an 'informal special group', as it does not qualify as a 'Commission expert group' or 'other similar entities' in the sense of Commission Decision C(2016)3301 establishing horizontal rules on expert groups, as its primary role is not to provide advice and assistance to the Commission. The group is 'informal' because it was created by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, and not by an act of the College or by a legislative act.

#### **3. Members of the Network**

The configuration of the new Network reflects the need of bringing together the relevant actors and experts at local, national, European and international level, who have a direct role in dealing with the protection and promotion of children's rights. In view of the above, a certain degree of flexibility in the configuration of the Network is ensured, so that participants can be chosen in light of the given subject or aspects to be discussed, with a view to ensuring that each meeting offers the opportunity to hold concrete discussions in an output oriented fashion.

Four types of members of the Network are to be distinguished:

- Permanent members: Member States' representatives. Each Member State appoints up to two representatives each. Member States are responsible for appointing for each meeting either one or two representatives in light of the topics to be discussed. These should normally include one representative from the leading service (e.g. Ministry of Social Affairs, also to ensure continuity)

and, where needed, an additional representative from the service in charge of the specific items on the agenda.

- Associated members: based on the agenda, the European Commission will invite for each meeting of the Network a group of associated members, who are representatives of international and non-governmental organisations, of local and regional authorities, Ombudspersons for children, academics and researchers, as well as children representing child rights organisations, and other organisations who have expressed an interest in participating in the work of the Network in reply to the call for expression of interest launched by the Commission.
- Associated members with permanent observer status: the European Commission may decide to allow a limited number of international organisations and/or EU institutions, bodies or decentralised agencies to be represented at all meetings and activities of the Network that are not explicitly reserved to Permanent Members only. This list can be reviewed on a yearly basis.
- Ad-hoc guests, upon invitation: the Commission, DG Justice and Consumers may invite experts with specific expertise with respect to a subject matter on the agenda to take part in the work of the group on an *ad hoc* basis.

#### **4. Activities of the Network**

The Network will develop a range of activities, including but not limited to:

- Meetings on-line, off-line or in hybrid format, in plenary settings as well as in sub-groups dedicated to specific topics of interest for some stakeholders only, or restricted only to the Permanent members. These meetings could also be called on an *ad hoc* basis for brainstorming, celebrating events, discussing research or study.
- Study / peer visits: a practical activity, as part of sharing of good practices or on a request by a member of the Network. These visits can be organised as such, or in combination with a regular meeting.
- Small studies and research activities.
- Training activities, organised by the Commission or by one or more permanent and / or associated members of the Network.

The members of the Network can make suggestions for the work programme, such as propose activities and offer to host meetings or study visits.

#### **5. Working methods**

##### 5.1 Chair

The group shall be chaired by the European Commission Coordinator for the rights of the child or a representative of DG Justice and Consumers.

##### 5.2 Agenda

Members of the group will be consulted on potential topics for discussion, study visits, research or training activities. The Chair decides on the agenda, and takes into account the input received from the members. DG Justice and Consumers shall draw up the agenda under the responsibility of the Chair and send it to the members of the Network.

### 5.3 Joint meetings

Joint meetings of the Network with other groups may be convened to discuss matters falling within their respective areas of responsibility.

### 5.4 Language

As a general rule, working documents will be drafted in English and meetings will be conducted in English.

### 5.5 Invitation of associated members

For each of the meetings / activities of the Network, DG Justice and Consumers will decide whom to associate or invite as *ad hoc* guests, by direct invitation, in addition to the Member States representatives. Associated members may be permitted by the Chair to take part in the discussions of the group and to provide expertise.

### 5.6 Attendance list

At each meeting, DG Justice and Consumers shall draw up an attendance list specifying, the name and representative in the meeting of the permanent members (Member States' authorities), associated members or *ad hoc* guests (organisations and others).<sup>1</sup>

### 5.7 Minutes

Minutes on the discussion on each point on the agenda and on the opinions delivered by the Network shall be taken and circulated to the attendees of the meeting, under the responsibility of the Chair.

### 5.8 Remuneration and cost

Participants in the activities of the group shall not be remunerated for the services they offer. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the Network shall be reimbursed by the Commission, as specified by the Commission in its invitation letters. Reimbursement shall be made in accordance with the provisions in force within the Commission and within the limits of the available appropriations allocated to the Commission departments under the annual procedure for the allocation of resources.

### 5.9 Child protection

For any activities or meetings involving children<sup>2</sup>, a dedicated child protection policy will be in place and a child protection officer will be appointed. Children will be accompanied by a parent, guardian or another adult taking care of their wellbeing and safety.

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<sup>1</sup> The names of the representatives of Member States' authorities, organisations, or observers may be included only subject to their prior freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous consent, in compliance with Article 3(15) and Article 7 of Regulation 2018/1725.

## **6. Transparency and data protection**

The Commission / DG Justice and Consumers shall ensure publication of the agenda and other relevant background documents in due time ahead of the meeting, followed by timely publication of all other relevant documents, including the minutes of the meeting and participants' submissions, on a dedicated website or section of a publicly accessible website. Exceptions to publication shall only be foreseen where it is deemed that disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) no. 1049/2001.

As concerns the group composition, the Commission / DG Justice and Consumers will publish the following data:

- the name of Member States' authorities ;
- the name of third countries' authorities;
- the name of member organisations; the interest represented shall be disclosed;
- the name of other public entities;
- the name of observers.

Personal data shall be collected, processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EC) no. 2018/1725. The processing of personal data, in particular for the purpose of publication, has to be based on the consent of the data subject, in compliance with Article 3(15), Article 5(1)(d) and Article 7 of Regulation 2018/1725.

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<sup>2</sup> A person under 18 years of age, as per the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child