



Brussels, 31 March 2022

MINUTES

First Meeting of the EU Network for Children's Rights 31 March 2022

1. Summary

On 31 March 2022, DG Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) launched the EU Network for Children's Rights, as a key deliverable on the occasion of the first anniversary of the [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#). It was officially opened by **Vice-President Šuica** (Vice-President for democracy and demography) and closed by the **Ana Gallego, Director-General of DG JUST**. This first meeting focused on discussions with Member States. This EU Network aims to reinforce the dialogue between the EU, Member States and stakeholders, and support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy.

Discussions started on the **protection of children fleeing the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine**, including strong messages from UNICEF, FRA, update on the Commission's response, with Member States sharing their solidarity efforts. Key deliverables under the **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child** one year after its adoption were also discussed, as well as synergies with the new **Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child**. Participants discussed **best practices at national level**, as well as the **future work** of the Network.

Participants included delegates from 23 Member States (AT, BE, BG, ES, HR, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, GR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PO, PT, RO, SL), 2 EEA EFTA countries (IS, NO). UNICEF, the Council of Europe, the European Parliament (Intragroup on children's rights), and FRA attended the meeting. The Commission was also represented by DG JUST (children's rights team, Gender-Equality unit and company law unit), DG HOME and DG EMPL. Marie-Cecile Rouillon, the Commission Coordinator for the rights of the child, chaired the meeting.

Please find **in annex an update on Member State's policies and actions** to protect and promote the rights of the child (as of 31 March 2022, based on the contributions received).

2. Opening Remarks

Vice-President for Demography and Democracy Dubravka Šuica opened the meeting with a poignant outline of the situation following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, informing the audience of the 2.5 million children that have already been forced out of their homes, the 1.5 million refugee children already in the Member States and the delicate situation of the more than 100,000 orphan children in institutional care. Vice-President Šuica stressed that child protection

is central in the EU support to persons fleeing the war, and stated the need for Member States to coordinate and collaborate in their response, building on the Temporary Protection Directive activation. Separated and unaccompanied children require a specific attention, as well as children in institutional care and children with disabilities. The issues of registration and swift assignment of legal guardians are important safeguards to protect children from human traffickers. Reminding the participants of what a milestone for EU and non-EU children the Strategy is, Vice-President Šuica mentioned the Strategy deliverables already carried out by the Commission: focus on child participation in policy making (e.g., drafting of child friendly policies, future Child Participation Platform), implementation of the European Child Guarantee, as well as the proposed [Directive on corporate sustainability](#) and proposed [Directive on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#). A reference was also made to the forthcoming revision of the Better Internet for kids Strategy and the preparation of the Youth Action Plan in EU external action.

Finally, Vice-President Šuica thanked the French Presidency of the Council of the EU for their decision to table Council Conclusions on the Strategy, as well the essential contribution of Member States, European Parliament, international organisations and civil society organisations for the efforts done on the enforcement of children's rights, as an imperative at this time of crisis and in general.

3. Protecting the rights of children fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

The **UNICEF** Representative to EU Institutions and Director of UNICEF Partnership Office thanked the Commission for its efforts and made an appeal for the Council to embrace the EU Strategy on the rights of the child. Addressing the dire situation provoked by the Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the UNICEF representative left a few thoughts that can be critical in addressing the crisis: the need for collective effort in screening procedures at the border and exchange of information; the established legal guardianship; the strengthen and capacitation of existing systems of social and child protection at national level; and the close collaboration with the the Ukrainian Government. A special warning was left in regards to the groups of especially vulnerable children, namely, the unaccompanied and separated children, children with disabilities and children from institutional care in Ukraine (over 100,000 prior to the war).

Building from this, **the Fundamental Rights Agency** shared FRA's observations from [the field visits at the borders](#), conducted in March 2022, stating that: children arriving at the borders are in need of housing, healthcare and education support; that human trafficking is a risk and local authorities must enforce an effective system of registration; that border countries such as Poland and Romania are developing initiatives in terms of child protection and assistance (i.g assignment of guardianship, development of dedicated taskforces to unaccompanied children, protocols of cooperation with local authorities).

One of the points stressed was that **countries should plan ahead** in terms of transfers and integration efforts. As the future of this war and of the people fleeing is still very unclear, States should take into account: the impact of psychological trauma; the fact that almost all arrivals are women, many with infants or young children who may face particular challenges in access to employment and finding child care; enabling family reunification and caring for the needs of children; introducing preventive and monitoring measures to prevent labour exploitation.

4. Presentation of the Commission’s Communication Welcoming those fleeing war in Ukraine: Readyng Europe to meet the needs and of the Operational guidelines to support Member States in applying the Temporary Protection Directive

DG HOME presented the Commission’s Communication on “[Welcoming those fleeing war in Ukraine: Readyng Europe to meet the needs](#)” and the [Operational guidelines for the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive](#). Besides the classical type of unaccompanied children (children that arrive by themselves with no caring adult), profiles are more diverse, with children arriving with trusted adults to whom they no have legal or familial bond or orphans accompanied by their guardians. Because of this atypical profile it is essential to identify the categories in which the children arrive, in order to give adequate support, for example, it is important to set up ways to help the adult accompanying the children to remain with them or to recognise the established guardianship of separated children.

DG HOME emphasised the answer given at EU level, namely the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive, which confers immediate protection status to UA citizens and third national citizens with residency in UA. The [10-Point Plan](#), presented at the extraordinary meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council (28 March 2022) was also mentioned, as it also features a plan to develop standard operating procedures and uniform guidance for the reception and support of children. DG HOME also stressed that all children are entitled protection, and invited Member States to design central points of contact for children in migration.

Member States Observations:

Several neighbouring countries took the floor to enumerate their experiences and actions in response to this war. **CZ** referred to an immense wave of solidarity and enunciated its regional coordination (registration, humanitarian help, healthcare, psychological support, employment support and child protection). In terms of education, some children are integrated in ordinary classrooms, others are taking classes with UA teachers and UA children are not eligible for adoption (which was a UA government concern). Robust psychosocial support is needed.

HU stated that it had launched the biggest humanitarian operation response in its history and that in applying the Temporary Protection Directive, UA citizens are provided the same rights as HU citizens (in education, healthcare, paediatric assistance).

RO mentioned its multisectorial response across ministries (health, education, family, protection, interior ministry), and that is preparing medium to long term national plan of action, which will aim at tracking children already integrated in the communities.

PT stated that by having one of the biggest UA communities it had already received more than 25,000 UA citizens, half of which children. PT has put together a taskforce aimed at promoting the rights of the child, providing immediate social support, healthcare, employment, learning the language and facilitating online school with UA schools. PT also suggested that an UA representative should be invited for the next Network meeting.

As part of the discussions, **UNICEF** called for using and making the existing national protection systems stronger. The Office of the **EP Coordinator** on Children’s rights called for the protection of the most vulnerable children, a strong registration and monitoring system, the cooperation with Ukrainian authorities, and synergies with the European child guarantee, while

flagging the risk of illegal adoption. The **EP Intergroup** on children’s rights Secretary-General referred to a recent visit in Poland and Romania, and to the forthcoming EP Resolution on the protection of persons fleeing Ukraine (e.g. raising the issue of registration, robust child protection systems, identification of vulnerabilities and prevention of illegal adoption).

5. Presentation of key deliverables of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child one year after its adoption

Marie-Cécile Rouillon, Commission Coordinator for the Rights of the Child, DG JUST, presented the key deliverables of the EU Strategy across its 6 pillars, and notably on child-friendly communication materials, and forthcoming initiatives. A representative of the Gender-Equality unit, DG JUST, presented the “Proposed directive on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence”, while a representative of the Company Law Unit, DG JUST talked about the “Proposed Sustainable corporate governance Directive”,

DG EMPL also alluded to the [European Child Guarantee](#) implementation, whose objective is to guarantee the access of children in need – persons under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion – to a set of key services: early childhood education and care education, healthcare, nutrition, housing. The Commission stressed the need to share the National Plans still missing.

6. New Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) and discussion on synergies

Regina Jensdottir, Council of Europe Coordinator for the Rights of the Child presented the [Council of Europe’s Strategy on the Rights of the Child \(2022 to 2027\)](#), which is action oriented and shows strong synergies with the EU Strategy. This CoE strategy, adopted in February 2022 under the Italian Presidency, builds on the previous strategies success and has as priority areas: freedom from violence for all children; equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children; access to safe use of technologies for all children; child-friendly justice for all children; giving a voice to every child; children’s rights in crisis and emergency situations. Priorities that became even more poignant in the current UA situation. Member States suggested that a joint rapporteur and aligned reporting could further synergies between the CoE and the Commission’s Strategies.

7. Croatian national plan for the rights of children

The **Croatian** Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, presented HR’s crosscutting [national plan for the rights of the children](#), which was in public consultation and entails the following goals: combating discrimination and social exclusion (protecting mental health especially), protecting against formal violence (physical, psychological, sexual, violence against peers, violence on digital environment); child participation, child friendly justice and protection in the digital environment. She also shared the challenges in implementing the temporary protection directive, notably as regards healthcare, education and child-friendly justice assistance.

The Commission recalled the importance of setting up national coordinated strategy on the rights of the child in all Member States.

8. French Presidency and the rights of the child

The French Presidency stated that it is paying close attention to the implementation of the Temporary Directive, aiming at sharing good practices and making sure that child participation is taken into account, while sharing information in times of crisis. The French Presidency referred to the Ministerial Conference on the implementation on the European Child Guarantee on 4 March 2022. The French Presidency will resume discussions, in view of adopting Council Conclusions on the EU Strategy on the rights of the child.

9. Roundtable discussion on future work of the Network

DG JUST discussed the working methods and planned activities of the Network (to which members were invited to provide comments until the end of April). They presented the [rules of procedure](#) that were later sent to participants for comments¹.

Of all that was discussed, Members showed particular interest in: peer learning activities, study visits, training activities, exchange on national level coordination and rights of the child strategies and monitoring; child participation and consultation; taking concrete action on Ukraine (while avoiding duplication with existing coordination mechanisms, notably under the Solidarity Platform) and the specific themes of health, education, prevention and child-friendly justice.

10. Closing remarks by Director-General Anna Gallego

Lastly, **Anna Gallego, Director-General**, DG Justice and Consumers, closed the meeting by thanking all participants for their roles in the advancement of children's rights, and the importance of the Network, in monitoring the implementation of the EU Strategy on the rights of the child. She welcome the French Presidency's endeavour to discuss Council conclusions on the rights of the child, and called for Member States' support. She stressed the importance of mutual learning and close cooperation with all key actors, international organisations, civil society organisations and children themselves. She called for issuing national strategy on children's rights, and insisted on the role of EU Network members in mainstreaming children's rights across ministries, as national contact points. This Network will be instrumental in identifying gaps on the protection of children's rights, exchange best practices and identify ways forward, for a concrete impact on children.

¹ No further comments were received.

**ANNEX: Update on Member State's policies and actions
to protect and promote the rights of the child (as of 31 March 2022)**

On 24 March 2021, the European Commission adopted the [EU Strategy on the rights of the child](#). Its overarching ambition is to build the best possible life for children in the EU and across the globe. In preparing the strategy, the views and suggestions of over 10,000 children have been taken on board. With this comprehensive strategy, the Commission is committing to putting children and their best interests at the heart of EU policies.

With **specific recommendations to Member States**, the strategy also aims to support Member States that have a key role to play in the realisation of the objectives, in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. **Based on the contributions received from Member States (as of 31 March 2022), this Annex indicates the policies and activities that EU Member States have undertaken** in the area of child rights since the adoption of the Strategy, contributing to the thematic areas set out in the strategy, as follows:

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

The European Commission invites Member States to:

- *establish, improve and provide adequate resources for new and existing mechanisms of child participation at local, regional and national level, including through the Council of Europe's child participation self-assessment tool²;*
- *increase awareness and knowledge of the rights of the child, including for professionals working with and for children, through awareness campaigns and training activities;*
- *strengthen, education on citizenship, equality and participation in democratic processes in school curricula at local, regional, national and EU level;*
- *support schools in their efforts to engage pupils in the school's daily life and decision-making.*

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

The European Commission invites Member States to:

- *some of your main actions to implement the European Child Guarantee;*
- *implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee and promote the involvement of young people in Youth Guarantee services;*
- *identify children as a priority target group in the national health strategies;*
- *build up networks with families, schools, youth, and other stakeholders and institutions involved in mental health of children;*
- *work towards achieving the targets proposed within the European Education Area;*
- *continue implementing fully, in close cooperation with the European Commission, all relevant actions recommended in the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2024³ in the area of education and training.*

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

The European Commission invites Member States to:

- *raise awareness of, and invest in capacity building and measures for (i) a more effective prevention of violence, (ii) protection of victims and witnesses, including with the necessary safeguards for child suspects or accused;*

² [Child Participation Assessment Tool](#), Council of Europe

³ [Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027](#) COM(2020)758 final

- *provide adequate support to children with specific vulnerabilities who suffer violence, as well as to violence that occur in schools;*
- *adopt legislation to ban corporal punishment in all settings, if not yet available, and work towards its elimination;*
- *improve the functioning of child protection systems at national level, in particular:*
- ✓ *establish (where not yet available), and improve child helpline (116 111) and missing children hotline (116 000)⁴, including through funding and capacity building;*
- ✓ *promote national strategies and programmes to speed up de-institutionalisation and the transition towards quality, family- and community-based care services including with an adequate focus on preparing children to leave care, including for unaccompanied migrant children.*

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

The European Commission invites Member States to:

- *support judicial training providers and all relevant professionals' bodies to address the rights of the child and child friendly and accessible justice in their activities. To this end, allocate necessary resources for the above capacity building activities, and take advantage of the support of the FRA to strengthen capacities on topics such as child-friendly justice and children in migration;*
- *develop robust alternatives to judicial action: from alternatives to detention, to the use of restorative justice and mediation in the context of civil justice;*
- *implement the Council of Europe's Recommendation on children with imprisoned parents⁵;*
- *strengthen guardianship systems for all unaccompanied children, including through participation to the activities of the European Guardianship Network⁶;*
- *promote and ensure universal, free and immediate access to birth registration and certification for all children. Moreover, increase capacity of front-line officials to respond to statelessness and nationality-related problems in the context of migration;*
- *enhance cooperation in cases with cross-border implications, to ensure the full respect of the rights of the child.*

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

The European Commission invites Member States to:

- *ensure effective equal access to digital tools and high-speed Internet connection, digital literacy, accessible online educational material and education tools etc. for all children;*
- *support the development of children's basic digital competences, through the Digital Competence Framework for citizens⁷;*
- *support media literacy actions as part of education, to develop children's ability to critically evaluate online content, and detect disinformation and abusive material;*
- *support and promote the work of the EU co-funded Safer Internet Centres, and support child helplines and hotlines in developing online avenues for communication;*
- *encourage children's and especially girls' participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) studies and dismantle gender stereotypes in this field to ensure equal opportunities in the digital labour market.*

⁴ [Commission Decision on reserving the national numbering range beginning with 116 for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value, \(2007/116/EC\)](#), subsequently amended, and [Directive establishing the European Electronic Communications Code, 2018/1972/EU, Article 96 - Missing children and child helpline hotlines](#)

⁵ [Recommendation concerning children with imprisoned parents](#), Council of Europe, CM/Rec(2018)5

⁶ [European Guardianship Network](#)

⁷ [Digital Competence Framework 2.0](#), EU Science Hub, European Commission

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

Would you like to share any relevant updates of the actions at the global sphere undertaken by your Member State?

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

The European Commission invites Member States to:

- develop, where not yet available, robust and evidence-based national strategies on the rights of the child, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, including children; and in synergy with other relevant national strategies and plans;
- call on Member States to ratify all UNCRC Optional Protocols and UNCRPD Optional protocols
- call on Member States to duly consider the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Invite the Member States to support all actions recommended in this strategy through appropriate financial resources, including EU funding.

BELGIUM (overview as of 31 March 2022, based on the contribution received)

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

Within the framework of the [Flemish youth and children's rights policy plan \(JKP\)](#), a number of actions are being set up to promote the participation of young people in political and democratic life:

Young people as co-creators of public space (JKP: OO 2.1.1.)

We shall work together with children and young people as co-creators of public space. From the perspective of children and youth, we want to make neighbourhoods more youth-friendly. Children and youth are encouraged to take a role in shaping public space.

Encourage the engagement by and the voice of children and young people (JKP: OO 3.1.2. – Action 3.1.2.2. action 3.1.2.3. and action 3.1.2.4.)

We encourage the engagement by and the voice of children and young people by focusing on innovative forms of engagement and volunteering by children and young people. For instance, a participation and networking route was included in the civic integration programme. In order to give shape to this integration route 'network and participation', 26 living labs were started with European resources (AMIF), in which 54 municipalities are involved.

We support Flemish policy areas in setting up participation pathways with children and young people and embedding them in their activities. To this end, we shall work together with relevant partners from the sectors and administrations. The expertise from the youth work sector in particular shall be disseminated.

We shall stimulate and promote international and intercultural exchanges with other countries and regions in terms of engagement and volunteering by children and young people.

Flemish youth and children's rights policy

In the framework of the Flemish youth and children's rights policy associations are subsidized to make qualitative information about children's rights.

The Flemish pupils council

The “Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel (VSK)”, or Flemish pupils council in English, is the organisation of, for and by all students in Flemish secondary education. The Flemish government had a subsidizing agreement for 2022-2024 with VSK.

VSK wants the voice of pupils to count everywhere, first and foremost at school and in policy-making. VSK strengthens pupils and pupil councils all over Flanders and voice the opinion of pupils on everything that has to do with secondary education.

VSK is made up of 30 enthusiastic pupils who run the organisation, 5 young people who are members of the Board of Directors, with Mauro Michielsen as president and Marthe Van Oothegem as vice-president, and Sabine Fahi, Loes Van Loocke, Arwen Boulez and Keanu Colpaert as board members.

More than 150 active pupils regularly give their opinion on education, more than 800 pupil councils are members of VSK and there are more than 400,000 users of the student card.

VSK is there for all pupils in secondary education in Flanders and Brussels. So for all 500,000 pupils.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

Within the framework of the Flemish youth and children's rights policy plan (JKP), a number of actions are being set up to promote socio-economic inclusion, health and education:

Inclusive leisure activities of children and young people with disabilities (*JKP: OO 4.2.2., Action 4.2.2.6.*)

Through targeted efforts, in addition to a target group-specific approach, we work towards more inclusive leisure time activities for children and young people with disabilities. We want to strengthen the general awareness in society of the added value of children and young people with specific care needs participating in society. We want to achieve this through a number of actions such as an awareness-raising campaign, developed by partners and stakeholders, to increase the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities in society, extracurricular activities, leisure time initiatives, etc. Another example is the promotion of strong inclusion practices and innovative projects that respond to the needs of children with disabilities and their parents, such as the 'hands-on' guidance of children towards inclusive leisure time activities. We focus on accessible leisure events, such as cultural events, festivals or sports events for children and young people with disabilities by labelling them as 'accessible events'.

Inclusive education for all children (*JKP: OO 1.2.1*)

Projects that prevent and combat discrimination at school are being promoted. The 'Equischools' project is an example of this. We want to create a school culture that promotes gender equality and combats discrimination. We try to break through gender- and hetero-prescriptive thinking by using FTEs to coach and professionalise educational actors for a gender-sensitive and LGBTQI-inclusive education.

By organising targeted pathways, we shall aim, through partnerships, to reach (early) school-leavers, low-skilled young people and young adults who experience difficulties in terms of (sustainable) entry into the labour market. The focus is mainly on gaining an insight into one's competencies, strengthening these competencies, increasing well-being and reducing the distance to the labour market.

The Flemish Community Education invests more than 2.5 million euro in schools. With that money, schools can invest in better accessibility and more user-friendliness, or they can adapt their outdoor play areas.

Children and young people in vulnerable situations shall be guided to leisure-time activities.

(Priority 4 of the youth and children's rights policy plan)

Within the framework of the youth and children's rights policy plan, actions are set up to guarantee the child's right to rest, leisure, recreational activities and cultural life as much as possible and this for all children, including children from underprivileged families, children with a handicap and refugee and

migrant children. Examples of such actions/projects are the summer schools, language stimulating extracurricular activities, the project call 'Over Drempeles', ... Efforts are also being made to realise inclusive youth work. In addition, the Flemish authorities are also launching targeted actions against child poverty. Leisure participation is thus stimulated with special attention to underprivileged groups.

Addressing the mental health of children and adolescents

(Priority 1 of the youth and children's rights policy plan)

Universal, selective and indicated prevention for children and adolescents is promoted by means of awareness-raising and information campaigns aimed at self-care. In doing so, we try to promote a positive image of mental health care and encourage children to seek psychological support where necessary.

A Flemish action plan for mental well-being has already been drawn up by experts.

An example of a project is 'TEJO' (therapists for young people), which provides therapeutic assistance for young people between the ages of 10 and 20. We also have the project of the 'Overkop' houses, where low-threshold and safe meeting places for young people are created, with a focus on strengthening their resilience and mental well-being. The focus is on prevention, early detection and early intervention.

Housing

In 13 pilot regions in Flanders, local coalitions were set up to prevent and end youth homelessness (inspired by the Canadian 'A Way Home' movement). The coalition consists of actors from different life domains who, from a shared agenda, implement coordinated actions with regard to care continuity and accessibility, sustainable housing solutions and early detection and intervention.

Research project

In March 2021, an action research project 'Social Integration' was already carried out by Demos vzw (non-profit association).

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

Within the framework of the Flemish youth and children's rights policy plan, a number of actions are being set up to combat violence against children and ensuring child protection:

Signs of Safety (SofS) is a solution-oriented method within youth protection that focuses on creating a safe (educational) situation for children and young people. In Flanders, this is done within the support centres for youth care and social services youth court. The goal is a working safety plan that changes the everyday living conditions around a child or adolescent so that everyone knows that the child or adolescent is safe when difficulties arise.

In Flanders, the "Kindreflex" was also developed. This instrument stimulates service and care providers to start a conversation with their adult clients about parenting and to detect disturbing family situations and to restore safety as soon as possible. Explicit efforts are made for professionals to be aware of the impact of, for example, intra-family violence on the child for whom the adult is taking care.

In addition, there is the "Youth Work and Distress" project of the Flemish Expertise Centre for Child Abuse. This project aims to strengthen youth work in all its diversity in noticing and dealing with situations of distress so that children and young people feel supported and protected. For this purpose, a framework for action, a shared approach and training tools for volunteers and professionals in youth work will be developed, based on good practices in youth work. This project is represented by a broad steering committee with representatives from social work, youth work and the Agency Growing Up ("Opgroeien") and the Department of Culture, Youth and Media.

"1712" is a helpline for every citizen who has questions about violence, abuse and child abuse. The chat hours of this chat line have already been expanded. Every year, the policy area of Welfare, Public Health and Family launches a campaign to make helpline 1712 better known to specific target groups or to raise

awareness about a particular theme (2020: transgressive behaviour in the sports and culture sector, 2021: adults who commit family violence out of spite or in a stressful situation).

There is a strong focus on the development of programmes and policies to prevent the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and for the recovery and social reintegration of child victims. "Grenswijs" is a tool that helps organisations to draft a policy against aggression, bullying and sexually transgressive behaviour. There is also the Youth Integrity Working Group of the Department of Culture, Youth and Media for involving the youth sector in integrity policy. This working group meets twice a year.

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

The child's best interests (JKP: OO 1.1.1. – Action 1.1.1.1.)

The best interests of the child were given a prominent place in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and are a central concept for interpreting all other articles. Actors working professionally or voluntarily with children and young people often have an intuitive sense of what is in the best interest of the minors they accompany. However, this is often not so easy to determine. Therefore, at the request of the Department of Culture, Youth and Media, the Children's Rights Knowledge Centre developed a step-by-step plan on the best interest of the child: 'In five steps to a decision in the best interest of the child'.

See:

<https://www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/nl/jeugd/vlaams-jeugd-en-kinderrechtenbeleid/5-stappen-naar-een-beslissing-het-belang-van-het-kind>

Belgium is a member of the European Guardianship Network.

The Belgian Guardianship Service belongs to the Federal Public Service Justice and has the mission to ensure judicial protection of all unaccompanied children staying in Belgium, by systematically appointing a guardian. It has to select, to appoint, to train, to support and to evaluate the guardians. The service is as well responsible for the identification of unaccompanied children by verifying their age and the persons that eventually accompany them. Besides the Guardianship Service, the Belgian Red Cross is also a member of The European Guardianship Network. Belgian Red Cross is an independent voluntary-sector organisation. Falling under the umbrella of the Belgian Red Cross, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders forms part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The mission involves three strands, namely to defend the interests of vulnerable people both at home and abroad, to be proactive in emergency-management, promoting self-reliance and organising blood supplies, and to care for vulnerable individuals. In all the activities, Belgian Red cross rely heavily on the dedication of volunteers. (EGN, 2022)

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

Within the framework of the Flemish youth and children's rights policy plan (JKP), a number of actions are being set up to strengthen the digital and information society:

Children's rights in the digital environment (JKP: OO 5.1.2. - Action 5.1.2.3)

Flanders participated on behalf of the whole of Belgium in the Council of Europe's project to consult children and young people as part of the preparation of the new children's rights strategy 2022-2027. Flanders, on behalf of Belgium, chose the theme of new technologies in cooperation with the Knowledge Centre (KeKi) and Mediaraven.

Support for schools and teachers in the area of digitisation (JKP: OO 5.1.1. – Action 5.1.1.1.)

In May 2021, a call was launched by VLAIO whereby schools could apply for support in developing and rolling out guidance programmes in schools around the themes of digital competences and media literacy. In addition, the knowledge centre 'Digisprong' was established in 2021 within the Department of

Education and Training. The aim of Digisprong is to realise high-quality digitalisation in education in order to prepare the adults of tomorrow for functioning in a technological society. Concretely, Digisprong wants to stimulate and support schools to develop an effective ICT policy, including an effective approach against cyberbullying. In addition, work is being done to promote the digital competence of teachers and ICT coordinators. Cyberbullying, its didactic approach and e-inclusion will be points of attention here. The 'Digibanks' project was also launched in 2021. This project helps to reduce the risk of digital exclusion among vulnerable groups. It aims to ensure equal access to digital technology by making laptops, screens and other hardware available on a conditional basis (e.g. through a loan service). Digital skills, both personal and technical, are strengthened through training and knowledge sharing and digital access to essential services (e.g. digital services from the Flemish government) is improved through guidance.

Improving the digital competences of children and young people (JKP: OO 5.1.1 – Action 5.1.1.5)

In April 2021, the Digital Inclusion Plan 'Everyone Digital' was developed, targeting, among others, young people in vulnerable situations. This plan aims to accelerate supra-local digital inclusion policies within sectors, organisations and facilities that work with young people in vulnerable situations. In September 2021, the Agency for Growing Up launched the project 'Bandbreedte', with a first phase focusing on the youth aid sector. Bandbreedte invests in a change trajectory for the youth aid sector by realizing a media coach training aimed at youth aid professionals, setting up a modular program of digital competencies for youth aid workers, developing supporting material on media wisdom for young people and families in vulnerable situations and investing in the welfare app-store to screen and unlock apps for young people and families. Through these various actions, youth care workers are strengthened and supported in the area of digitisation and media literacy.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

Belgium puts the rights of the child on the agenda of its actions on the global level. So, par example the Flemish representative for Belgium in the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child is also member of the bureau of the Committee.

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan of the government of Flanders

The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan is a policy instrument which outlines, for the next term of office, the Government of Flanders' vision on the youth and children's rights policy to be pursued with regard to five established priorities. This plan applies to all children, young people and young adults in Flanders aged between 0 and 30.

Since the 2000-2004 term of office, the Government of Flanders has been bundling its efforts for children and young people across the policy areas in youth policy plans. From the outset, children's rights have formed one of the foundations of these youth policy plans. In response to the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Government of Flanders adopted separate Flemish Children's Rights Action Plans in 2004 and 2011. From the 2015-2019 term of office onwards, the efforts for children and young people in all policy areas of the Government of Flanders were bundled together into an integrated youth and children's rights policy plan. This is the second combined youth and children's rights policy plan.

See: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/nl/jeugd/vlaams-jeugd-en-kinderrechtenbeleid/beleidsplan-jkp>

The Liaison agency Flanders-Europe organized on 24 June 2021 a **webinar** on the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, with Iris Abraham from the European Commission.

See: <https://www.vlewa.eu/nl/onderwijs-jeugd-cultuur-en-sport/cultuur-en-media/events/webinar-eu-strategie-voor-de-rechten-van-het-kind>

Plan d’actions relatif aux droits de l’enfant du gouvernement de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles et de la Wallonie : <https://oejaj.cfwb.be/droitsdelenfant/les-droits-de-lenfant-en-belgique/#c28639>

Implementation of the concluding observations

The concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for Belgium (2019) have been considered by the National Commission on the Rights of the Child of Belgium to determine the competent administrations and ministers. In the next months the competent administrations will give input to the commission in order to come to a state of play on the implementation of the concluding observations by the Belgian authorities.

See: <https://ncrk-cnde.be/en/periodic-reporting-of-belgium-to-the-crc/?lang=en>

Developing a child-friendly version of the latest COBs: Fight4YourRight (#F4YR)

Child Rights Connect also gives the important advice to translate the concluding observations into the national language(s) and produce simplified and child-friendly versions as a way to show State commitment and transparency to the CRC reporting process and to ensure the dissemination and understanding of the COBs to the wider public and children.

Therefore, at the end of Belgium’s last review by the CRC in 2019, at the initiative of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child – Belgium , a project was launched aimed at developing a child-friendly version of the latest COBs: Fight4YourRight (#F4YR).

The objectives of the project

Making the Concluding Observations more accessible as to:

- Foster their dissemination;
- Make them better known and increase their use by children, governments, (child rights) professionals and the population in general;
- Provide children with the necessary tools to contribute to the monitoring of the implementation of Belgium’s children’s rights obligations;
- Provide children with the necessary tools towards informed participation and for their opinions to be taken into account more frequently.

See: <https://ncrk-cnde.be/en/projects/fight-for-your-right-a-child-friendly-version-of-the-un-concluding-observations/>

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

As a state party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Republic of Bulgaria has reaffirmed its commitment to support children and has taken measures to ensure the effectiveness and active participation of children at local and national level and to encourage the implementation of practical mechanisms for full participation of children at all levels of decision-making. In 2003, the Children's Council was established as an advisory body to the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection. It's aiming to encourage children's participation in the implementation of children's policies and decision-making. The Children's Council consists of representatives of all administrative districts in the Republic of Bulgaria, and there are also 4 quotas for children from vulnerable groups and one quota for a child granted international protection in Bulgaria.

According to the data of the regional departments of education in 2021 in 166 schools in the country are formed and are functioning student councils, in 34 schools are formed but not functioning, and in 72 schools are not formed student councils. According to an analysis of the reasons for which a student council of schools in the different districts has not been formed or is functioning, which takes into account the following reasons why school councils do not function: demotivation of students to participate in student councils due to distance learning electronic environment and the inability to hold face-to-face meetings of councils; lack of desire on the part of students or low motivation and uncertainty on the part of students; insufficient support and activity on the part of teachers to organize a student council at school level.

In the academic year 2020-2021 the subject "Civic education" was introduced. It has a special emphasis on the rights of the child. In 2021, under a project of UNICEF - Bulgaria, and with the assistance of the Ministry of Education and Science, the creation of training programs on the rights of the child from the preschool group to the second stage of high school began. In the same year, trainings for teachers of civic education were held.

A National Youth Strategy 2021-2030 has been developed, which is in line with the European Youth Policy. The draft National Strategy for Youth was adopted on July 22, 2021 and is to be considered by the National Assembly. Objective № 3 of the National Youth Strategy 2021-2030 aims to "Promote the involvement, participation and empowerment of young people". The essence of the goal is to stimulate the involvement, quality participation and empowerment of young people, as an essential prerequisite for the effectiveness and full implementation of youth policy, as well as ensuring quality participation of young people at all levels of decision-making - local, national and European. Young people under the age of 18 are covered by Objective 3 of the Strategy.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

The European Guarantee for the Child is an extremely important initiative in which Bulgaria, as an EU member state, participates and has constant commitments in connection with its implementation. In pursuance of the Council Recommendation on the Establishment of a European Child Guarantee (the Guarantee) adopted in June 2021, an Action Plan is under development, which will have a horizon of 2030. The plan will create the necessary framework, covering flagship measures and interventions to reduce child poverty and promote their social inclusion. In line with the objectives of the Guarantee, the plan envisages bringing together a wide range of measures at national, regional and local levels within the various sectoral policies covered by it - education, health, social services, housing, etc.

In line with the pan-European poverty reduction target by 2030, Bulgaria has set an ambitious national target for poverty reduction and social exclusion by that time. A specific sub-target has been formulated that places a special focus on children and tackling child poverty (reducing poverty, the number of children under 18 at risk of poverty or social exclusion with 196,750). Achieving these ambitious goals

would not be possible without the clear identification of individual groups of children in need and the formulation of adequate and targeted measures, which is the basis of an action plan.

Bulgaria is one of the seven Member States of the European Union in which pilot projects are being implemented in connection with the implementation of the European Child Guarantee. The results of its implementation have a significant contribution to the development of the action plan, the identification of the main target groups and the formulation of specific measures to support disadvantaged children. The pilot project "European Guarantee for the Child" is implemented in partnership with UNICEF Bulgaria and is aimed at children with disabilities and developmental difficulties and children from vulnerable families, including children from vulnerable communities. The project activities are implemented in 10 municipalities on the territory of three districts in the country. Within the framework of the project a report was prepared "Inequitable childhood - Comprehensive analysis of the current state and dimensions of child poverty and social exclusion in Bulgaria as well as policies, programs, services, budgets and mechanisms to address them." In the process related to the development of the plan, the participation of children is envisaged by conducting consultations for research and taking into account their opinion, including discussion of the document by the Children's Council.

In addition, the development of the new Human Resources Development Program (HRDP) is in the final stages, which will focus efforts on measures for social inclusion and tackling child poverty, as well as access to health services for children.

The HRDP 2021-2027 sets Priority 3 "Promotion of Youth Employment" with a budget of BGN 735 million, which will contribute to meeting the challenges facing young people in the labor market and achieving the goals of the Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 and the national documents implementing the Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 "A bridge to jobs - strengthening the Youth Guarantee". A number of measures are being implemented to support and promote equality between women and men as parents.

With the decision of the Council of Ministers № 388 of 23.04.2021 the National Strategy for Mental Health of the Citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 and the Action Plan to it were adopted, as children and adolescents are one of the target groups in the strategy. The strategy includes activities for the opening of new services and services throughout the country to expand access and improve services to children and adolescents, as well as activities related to increasing the capacity of the system to improve the functioning of children and adolescents psychiatry in Bulgaria.

With the Decision of the Council of Ministers № 333/09.04.2021 the National Program for Improvement of Maternal and Child Health 2021-2030 and the Action Plan for it for the period 2021-2023 were adopted. The program aims to ensure sustainability and build on the results in the field of maternal and child health, achieved in the implementation of the National Program for Improving Maternal and Child Health 2014-2020, as well as to improve key indicators related to youth health people, pregnant women, mothers and children through active health promotion and disease prevention, improving access to health services outside the scope of health insurance, and by supporting good practices in the field of integrated health and social services.

The program ensures the implementation of activities for which there is no funding from other sources and which have a significant health effect, related to the early diagnosis of diseases and disabilities and the provision of comprehensive medical care for children with certain chronic diseases.

In the National Program for Prevention of Chronic Noncommunicable Diseases 2021-2025, adopted by Decision № 552/28.07.2021 of the Council of Ministers, which is a continuation of the previous Program implemented in the period 2014-2020, children are included as priority target group. The activities are aimed at increasing the prevention of behavioral health risk factors, related to unhealthy diet, low physical activity, alcohol abuse and smoking. Information campaigns, talks and lectures with discussions are held in schools and kindergartens, health and educational materials are distributed.

Every year, the National Student Competition "Ambassadors of Health" is held. The initiative is organized by the Ministry of Health, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Environment and Water, and with

the assistance of the World Health Organization Regional Office in Bulgaria and Bulgarian Youth Red Cross.

The Ministry of Health implements a policy aimed at ensuring equal access of all citizens of Bulgaria to health services, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity and social affiliation. Preventive examinations, raising health knowledge and providing access to health information are conducted every year. For newborns and preschool children living in remote areas of medical institutions from ethnic groups, no GP has been selected and/or no permanent address registration, examinations are conducted with mobile general practice clinics and pediatric clinics.

According to the pre-approved schedules, the regional health inspectorates organize immunizations/re-immunizations of children with irregular immunization status for their age, in settlements with difficult access to medical care. In order to take measures for persons with the highest degree of health vulnerability in 2020, the Ministry of Health is implementing a policy to establish the model of health mediators.

According to Ordinance № 1 of 19 August 2020 on the requirements for the activity of the health mediator (SG No.75 of 25.08.2020) of the Minister of Health, the municipalities in which health mediators are appointed shall send reports on the performed activity. According to Ordinance №1 in the activity of health mediators, the basis of the priority group are newborns and children, for whom they assist in monitoring immunizations, preventive examinations and access to GPs.

The implementation of the strategic and operational goals in the field of comprehensive, accessible and quality pre-school and school education in 2021 is carried out by conducting national educational policies and integrating them with other public policies to achieve the best overall result. It is directly related to the implementation of the priorities set in the Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030) and the main objective of Priority 1 "Education and Skills" of the National Development Program: Bulgaria 2030, Goal 4 of the UN Global Sustainable Development Goals: "Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all", as well as European priorities for inclusive education.

According to the general framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria until 2030, 9 priority areas for the development of education and training until 2030 have been identified. The priority areas cover all significant horizontal challenges in the education and training system, following a holistic approach and in line with the identified policy areas:

1. Early childhood development
2. Competences and talents
3. Motivated and creative teachers
4. Cohesive school communities and systematic work with parents
5. Effective inclusion, sustainable inclusion and educational integration
6. Educational innovation, digital transformation and sustainable development
7. Realization in the professions of the present and the future
8. Lifelong learning
9. Efficient management and participation in networks.

In 2021, changes have been made in the following regulations, the implementation of which will have a positive impact on children's right to access quality education:

- Ordinance № 10 of 01.09.2016 on the organization of activities in school education was amended and supplemented.
- The Regulations on the structure and functions of the regional departments of education have been amended and supplemented.
- Ordinance № 18 of 09.09.2021 on the inspection of kindergartens and schools was adopted, which is in line with the objectives set in the Strategic Framework for the development of education in the period from 2021 to 2030, with the prospect of helping to achieve them.

To ensure equal access to quality education and the inclusion of every child and student, the Ministry of Education and Science is actively working to create conditions and resources for building a supportive environment in kindergartens and schools in the context of inclusive education.

The global pandemic following COVID-19 posed many challenges, especially in the field of mental health, as it required at least a readjustment of the entire way of life. Children and students were particularly affected due to the very limited opportunity for face-to-face learning in the classrooms and the deepening social isolation. In 2021 the first in Bulgaria online platform for additional support of children with special educational needs - "Support me", created jointly with UNICEF - Bulgaria, and with the Regional Center for Support of Inclusive Education - Sofia-city.

In 2021, was also implemented the National Program "Creating an accessible architectural environment and security at school", module "Creating an accessible architectural environment." For the preparation of the transition to the next educational level, for the motivation for continuing education and for participation in the labor market, career guidance and counseling for students from all stages of education through career counselors in the centers for support of personal development are essential.

Respecting one of the basic rights of children to live in conditions that allow them to achieve the highest standard of health, priority activities are implemented aimed at optimizing the determinants of good health - the formation of habits for physical activity and motivation for sports activities. In order to ensure the protection of the right of access to healthy physical activity of every child, the target subsidy has been increased, which the state annually provides to kindergartens, schools and colleges for physical activity, physical education, sports and sports tourism. It annually finances and supports the implementation of programs aimed at the main determinants of good health - the formation of habits for a healthy lifestyle, physical activity and motivation for sports. In order to guarantee the right of equal access to healthy physical activity and sports, all children are funded programs for target groups - children with disabilities and children at risk.

The right of children to choose a specific field in which to develop and to future professional realization is guaranteed by creating conditions for selection, sports improvement and performance of 7,000 students in 31 sports in 19 municipal and 6 state sports schools. In order to guarantee the right to protection of every child, measures for protection of gifted children in various fields are implemented. Discovering, directing and retaining talent are leading factors in setting positive examples for children and young people.

In connection with the National Program for Implementation of Youth Activities under the Law on Gambling and the National Youth Program (2021-2025) funded 50 project proposals in three areas on the following topics: "Prevention of gambling addiction among young people"; "Prevention of various forms of addiction" (drugs, smoking, alcohol, internet, online/computer games, etc.); "Prevention of aggression among young people" (violence, hate speech, discrimination, racism, etc.) and "Promoting a healthy lifestyle".

This thematic area of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child also covers two thematic areas of the National Youth Program 2021-2025, namely Thematic Area 1 "Non-formal learning for the acquisition of skills and key competencies" and Thematic Area 4 "Promoting healthy Lifestyle". According to the official data of the National Statistical Institute for the respective years, at least 16.5% of the young people in the country should be covered by the implementation of projects under the Program for each year of its implementation, at least 10% of them falling into the NEETs group (young people who do not study, work or study).

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

The composition of the interdepartmental working group for elaboration of the National Program for Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children at the National Council for Child Protection has been updated. The working group is active, as the program is a strategic national framework for coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders, which not only creates an important mechanism for communication between all, but also contains the necessary measures and activities to prevent violence in

all its forms between and on children. The emphasis will be on the needs of children, parents and professionals on the subject, as well as building a civil society culture against violence and abuse of children in Bulgaria.

In 2020, in order to achieve legislative savings, the two draft laws amending and supplementing the of Criminal Procedure Code - the bill that fulfills the commitments arising from the Directive (EU) 2016/800 on procedural guarantees for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings and the bill on the correct transposition of Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crimes and to replace Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA. The draft Law provides the juvenile accused with a number of additional rights and provides for special measures to ensure that this category of accused participates more effectively in criminal proceedings and fully enjoys their right to a fair trial. It is to be submitted for approval by the Council of Ministers and adoption by the National Assembly as soon as possible.

The general ban on all forms of violence, incl. and corporal punishment of children is regulated in the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence. In 2019, all forms of domestic violence were criminalized. The Penal Code criminalizes the commission of bodily injuries, as for bodily injuries committed to minors a qualified staff is regulated and higher sanctions are introduced.

In 2020, a draft law amending the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence was prepared, the main objectives of which are: to improve the legislation and regulate a set of measures aimed at creating a reliable, effective protection and guarantee for protection of life, health and rights of persons at risk of domestic violence and institutional building for the purpose of prevention and protection against domestic violence. With regard to child victims of violence or witnesses of violence, a new protection measure is envisaged - directing the injured children to use specialized services for the protection of children, victims or witnesses of violence. As of March 2022, a working group has been formed, which aims to consider the controversial issues in a short time and to propose final texts in the bill.

A key point in educational institutions is the involvement of parents as a partner. In this regard, activities to support parents are planned within the framework of the developed Comprehensive Program for Building a Safe School Environment - "Steps Together", which are implemented in kindergartens and schools. In partnership with UNICEF - Bulgaria, the program is tested from the beginning of the school year 2020/2021 for a period of 2 years in five schools.

Under the project "Support for Inclusive Education" under OP 2014 - 2020, the developed program "Steps together" is to be implemented in 450 schools involved in the project. The project will train up to 450 specialists in skills for working with parents at the level of - student, class, school, community.

According to Art. 229, para. 1 of the Preschool and School Education Act, the Minister of Education and Science organizes the creation and maintenance of an Information Register of the approved training programs for raising the qualification of pedagogical specialists. In most of these programs the topic of creating a positive school environment is covered, including the work with parents.

In 2020, the Ministry of Youth and Sports joined the Start Talking initiative. It is a call by the Council of Europe (CoE) to public authorities and the sports movement to end sexual abuse of children in sport. Governments, sports clubs, associations and federations, as well as athletes and coaches are committed to taking concrete measures to prevent and respond to abuses in this regard. The work is being done according to the established methodology and by the end of this year the roadmap will be prepared and approved and the campaign launched. Videos in Bulgarian from the initiative can be found at the following link: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/sport/start-to-talk>. In order to raise the awareness and knowledge of the specialized police officers for work with children, joint trainings are held with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on "Identification, guidance and work with unaccompanied foreign children".

Police officers are involved in supporting the efforts of schools to engage students by conducting activities under the two national programs "Children's Police Department" and "Police in Schools". The National Program "Police Work in Schools" is mandatory for the training of police officers in the field of "Child Crime" in the country. The objectives of the program include general prevention for school-age

children, building safe models for adolescents, creating a positive attitude towards the police and its activities among children and familiarizing students, according to their age, with basic elementary legal concepts.

The Children's Police Department program trains children aged 8 to 12. The program aims to protect the life, health, rights and property of children, to develop skills and habits for proper behavior in various situations, intolerance to criminal encroachment, reduction of crimes and anti-social acts committed by children and against children, and the creation of civic position and strengthening trust in institutions. There is a special training module aimed at reducing aggression among adolescents. The topics are tailored to the age of the children and aim to reduce violence against and by children. The analysis of the two programs shows that they reduce the risk of committing illegal acts by minors.

Various events are held, aimed at road safety, sports, as well as in order to increase the preparation of adolescents for protection against fires, disasters and emergencies. In order to prevent children on the Internet and reduce violence against children, teachers and other professionals are trained to work with children to acquire protection skills in the online environment. Information materials for the safety of children are developed and published on the Internet.

The HR Program 2021-2027 will support those in need in the family and the community through preventive and supportive services for children, adults and disadvantaged groups. Specifically, the program will provide support and prevention of victims of violence, including domestic violence and victims of trafficking. In addition, among the measures aimed at social protection systems, it is envisaged to improve the coordination between the child protection bodies at all levels when working with children, victims of violence or at risk of violence. The program also envisages a specific goal aimed at promoting the socio-economic integration of marginalized communities such as the Roma, which will fund community campaigns to combat domestic violence, early marriages and other patriarchal practices of control and violence.

The reform for deinstitutionalization of child care in Bulgaria is in its final stage. In the context of the National Strategy "Vision for the deinstitutionalization of children in the Republic of Bulgaria" and the measures of the Updated Action Plan for its implementation, the focus of the process is on supporting children and families to prevent risks, including prevention of abandonment, improving reintegration measures, early intervention and providing more and more opportunities to support children in a family environment. The application of an integrated approach in the development of early childhood development services is also essential. In accordance with the principle that the family is the best environment for the upbringing and development of each child, and as a result of the complex measures and purposeful efforts of all parties involved, there is a predominance of care in a family environment.

Social services are an important tool to support children and families, including when applied as protection measures under the Child Protection Act. It should be borne in mind that social services financed by the state are free of charge for both children and parents or carers. As of January 31, 2022, 643 social services for children have been opened and function as a state delegated activity, with a capacity of 14,802 places. The counseling and daily forms of social services in the community prevail both in number and capacity.

As part of support for children at risk who are placed outside the family, as well as for children and young people leaving the formal care system, are measures aimed at acquiring skills for independent living, including by providing quality and affordable social and integrated services. The complex needs of these children and young people require an integrated approach to work and interaction between all parties involved, as well as the creation of conditions to guarantee their rights and interests. An important moment for the integration of young people in society is their inclusion in employment.

Child poverty is a serious challenge at both European and national level. In implementation of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2030 an Action Plan for the period 2021-2022 was adopted (with Decision of the Council of Ministers № 553 of 28.07.2021). It is structured in 8 areas, according to the priorities of the Strategy, which places special emphasis on policies to reduce poverty among children, as a specific vulnerable group and support for children and families. In this regard, the measures set out in the plan are aimed at promoting parental employment, reconciling

work and family life (including through flexible working arrangements), expanding the network of early childhood development services; Providing access.

In addition, the program will continue the process of providing preventive and supportive services in the community for children and young people. The focus will be on early childhood development and early intervention, prevention and reintegration, improving the quality and effectiveness of the network of social and integrated services to support children and their families. Targeted approaches to risk prevention in children will be applied, while the role of the family in their development will be stimulated.

Funds for social services delegated by the state activities are provided from the state budget through municipal budgets according to the standards set annually by the Council of Ministers for the activities delegated by the state with natural and value indicators based on the total service capacity. With a Decision of the Council of Ministers from 2020, the standards for financing social services, delegated by the state activities in 2021, were adopted.

For 2021 with the Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2021 the funds for social services delegated by the state activities amount to BGN 421.9 million or 45% more than in 2020. They also include the funds (BGN 79.7 million) for financing the social service “assistant support” under the Social Services Act.

Social services for children delegated by the state are provided by day care centers for children and young people with disabilities, community support centers, street children centers, crisis centers, mother and baby units, family accommodation centers, transitional housing, centers for social rehabilitation and integration. In 2021 the funds for these services amount to BGN 162.4 million or have an increase of BGN 25.1 million. Funds for monthly student benefits in the amount of BGN 1.6 million have also been provided in 2020, which will increase to BGN 1.8 million in 2021.

In 2020, in the conditions of an extraordinary epidemic situation in the country, the state budget provided additional funds in the amount of BGN 15 million to increase the standards for financing the social activities delegated by the state in connection with the package of new socio-economic measures by the end of 2020.

With the latest amendment to the Asylum and Refugees Act at the end of 2020, unaccompanied children are represented by lawyers registered in the Legal Aid Register of the National Legal Aid Bureau. The representative of the minors seeking or receiving international protection, until the person reaches the age of majority, has the authority to represent him/her before all administrative bodies, incl. social, health, educational and other institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria, in order to protect the best interests of the child.

Conditions have been created to guarantee access to information, education, healthcare and social protection. The identification of the special needs of children seeking international protection begins at the earliest possible stage - when registering and conducting the mandatory medical examination in the health offices, which allows for immediate action to refer to specialized care and services and guarantee special needs.

According to the procedures for minors, SAR social experts apply tools to assess the best interests of the child for each unaccompanied child and accompanied children at risk. Established tools for identifying vulnerable persons, standard operating procedures for prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, a questionnaire for early identification of people seeking protection with traumatic experience are used and the AESU tool for identifying persons with special needs is used. The implementation of the legal provision supports the process of inclusion of children seeking international protection in the Bulgarian educational system; measures have been taken to ensure children's rapid access to health care. According to the national legislation, the applicants for international protection are accommodated in a territorial division of SAR at the Council of Ministers or at an address chosen by them, and appropriate reception conditions are provided for minors and foreign minors seeking international protection. In the ROC - Sofia are created two safe areas with separate security and 24/7 care for children by a team of specialists - social workers, psychologist, lawyer and translator. The safe areas have a total capacity of 238 seats and have adaptation rooms for newly accommodated children, as well as

a room for individual conversations. When working with unaccompanied children, the Methodology for providing services in safe areas is applied.

In 2021, an Advisory Group was established to create an online platform for targeting and assisting victims of trafficking, based on the National Mechanism for Referral and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in the Republic of Bulgaria.

To improve inter-institutional cooperation, a draft Coordination Mechanism for interaction between institutions and organizations in cases of unaccompanied or separated from their families foreign children located in the Republic of Bulgaria, including children seeking and/or receiving international protection (Coordination Mechanism), as the process is coordinated by the State Agency for Child Protection.

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) conducts mandatory initial training for candidates for junior magistrates, as well as the ongoing qualifications of judges, prosecutors and investigators, covering all aspects of the protection of children's rights. A number of trainings were held on topics related to the protection of children's rights and juvenile justice.

In the last year, two seminars were held in connection with the work with children in pre-trial and judicial proceedings, as well as one seminar on trafficking in children with a focus on their forced involvement in criminal activities. In the first half of 2022, the NIJ and a webinar on "Individual assessment and individual treatment of children in conflict with the law" will be held.

The Justice Program of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism will implement projects to improve the situation of children, victims or witnesses of crime or children in conflict with the law. This will be achieved through the development and implementation of specialized services to support and provide an environment for the protection of children at risk, as well as through campaigns to raise public awareness and sensitivity.

In 2019, an expert working group at the Ministry of Justice prepared a draft law on Educational measures against persons who have committed a crime or administrative violation as minors and the reasons for it. The working group reached a consensus on the need to build a system of measures to protect the best interests of the juvenile offender, while respecting his/her dignity, as well as the dignity of the victim of the violation. Due to the lack of consensus on the scope of the draft law, the work will be resumed and the bill will be updated by June 30, 2022.

A working group has been set up with the task of analyzing and preparing proposals for bringing Bulgarian legislation in line with the provisions of Council Regulation 2019/1111 of 25.06.2019 on the competence, recognition and enforcement of decisions on matrimonial matters and matters relating to parental responsibility, and on the international abduction of children, which will replace Regulation (EC) 2201/2003 (Brussels IIa) from 01.08.22. The emphasis is on enhanced international cooperation with increased mutual trust in the judicial systems of the Member States and respect for the best interests of the child.

In October 2021, experts from the Ministry of Education and Science conducted a thematic inspection in the boarding schools (BS) and the social-pedagogical boarding school (SBS) on an approved scorecard. The thematic inspection was carried out in order to provide methodological support in relation to the correctional and educational work that specialists in these institutions carry out with students with anti-social behavior, and to discuss problematic issues with pedagogical specialists in these institutions. As a result of the thematic review, specific recommendations were made to establish a working group to discuss the opening of a specialized social service in the community for reintegration of students into society after leaving BS and SBS.

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

The National Child Helpline 116 111 at the State Agency for Child Protection, which is for information, counseling and psychological support, also receives alarming information from children and adults who report child abuse or witness domestic violence. The line is open 24 hours a day, free of charge, it receives calls from all over the country. The line also receives calls from concerned adults for children, who often report children at risk of neglect, abandonment or abuse. 116 111 employs some of the best specialists in the supporting professions - psychologists and pedagogues.

Assistance is provided for the digital and media literacy of children and their parents, staff from cultural institutes and organizations, including community centers, on projects that are implemented jointly with the Coalition for Media Literacy. Art schools are involved in STEM projects and especially in STEAM - with arts included.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

The Republic of Bulgaria reaffirmed its readiness to support children's participation and to promote the implementation of practical mechanisms for the full participation of children in decision-making during the Global Forum for Children and Youth and the initiative of the Children's Friends Group and Sustainable Development Goals, New York, 7-9 December 2021. The Republic of Bulgaria is committed to continuing its efforts to reduce poverty among children, to include them in the school system and to upgrade the Code of Ethics for children (social workers, doctors and medical professionals, teachers, police officers, judges, etc.).

At the national level, by order of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, an Operational Coordination Group has been established and is functioning at the Council of Ministers. The task of the group is to coordinate the actions of state institutions with the efforts of regional governments and municipalities, business, civic associations and people to evacuate and accommodate those seeking protection in our country from the war in Ukraine. The Operational Coordination Group coordinates the work of six interdepartmental groups, which have an interdepartmental staff and are headed by Deputy Ministers.

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

The National Development Program BULGARIA 2030 includes a number of measures regarding the rights of the child, among which are:

- providing integrated and accessible services for early childhood education and care, as well as for the inclusion of children;
- completing the reform of juvenile justice and directing efforts to increase the quality and effectiveness of the legal and institutional framework in the field of guaranteeing the rights and protection of children;
- promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged children;
- finalizing the process of deinstitutionalization of child care, with a focus on early childhood development and early intervention;
- support for families with children with family benefits for children, the main purpose of which is to raise children in a family environment;
- construction of social/municipal housing, creation of integrated intersectoral services for the homeless, including begging children;
- creating motivation for physical activity and practicing sports in children's free time.

The adoption of an Action Plan for 2021 - 2024 of the NDP: BULGARIA 2030 is forthcoming, indicating the specific actions by the responsible agencies.

In 2021, the State Agency for Child Protection created a "White Paper on the Child" - a document emphasizing the need to pay special attention to the topic of support, development and well-being of the

child in our country. The document is the result of in-depth work on structuring 72 materials provided by involved ministries, agencies and organizations, which reflect developed and implemented policies for child development and protection. The White Paper provides information on what has been achieved so far and poses a number of challenges in various areas covered by it: Welfare and Social Inclusion, Children's Health, Education, Sport and Culture, Children's Participation and Security and Justice. The opinions of children, members of the Children's Council of the SACP, in turn, show that the most important thing for them is really to be heard and their opinion to be taken into account in matters that concern them.

The White Paper was distributed in Bulgarian and English to the institutions and partners involved.

On March 24, 2022, the 46th regular meeting of the National Council for Child Protection was held. At the meeting it was decided to resume the work of the interdepartmental working group at the Council, which will propose a Plan for the establishment of a National Strategy for the Child.

During the meeting, a review of the progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in connection with the preparation of the VI-VII Consolidated Periodic Report was made. Bulgaria should present its progress by June 2022. The work on the draft National Program for Prevention of Violence and Child Abuse was also presented.

In accordance with the current national legislation and the definition of the horizontal nature of the policy on the rights of people with disabilities, at the end of 2020, a new National Strategy for People with Disabilities with a time range of 2021-2030 was prepared and adopted.

Within the framework of the Strategy, a number of measures are envisaged under the various priorities, which are specific and aimed entirely at children with disabilities.

Republic of Bulgaria, as a country party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the CRPD, through its policy, continues its work to achieve one of the main objectives of the two conventions, namely respecting and ensuring the rights of every child within its jurisdiction, and to promote the strengthening of an inclusive environment for people with disabilities, and in particular children with disabilities, in a way that allows them to lead independent lives.

The main focus of the state policy on the rights of people with disabilities, and especially children with disabilities, is to create conditions and opportunities for providing targeted support and encouragement measures for this vulnerable group, which, especially in the current environment, will have a positive impact on improving quality of life and prevention of social exclusion. Bulgaria is strongly committed to guaranteeing and protecting the rights of children with disabilities and their inclusion in society on an equal basis with others. Bulgarian legislation provides legal guarantees for equal opportunities for all by protecting against all forms of violence, non-harassment and discrimination. All national policies related to the implementation of both conventions and other international treaties in this area follow a human rights-based approach and are developed in close consultation with people with disabilities and their representative organizations.

Bringing national legislation in line with the principles and regulations of the CRPD is an ongoing process, and to ensure its success, the Bulgarian government actively engages people with disabilities as equal partners at every stage - from developing measures to adopting, implementing and monitoring them. At the beginning of 2021, by a decision of the Council of Ministers, an Action Plan was adopted for the implementation of the final recommendations to the Republic of Bulgaria made by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Action Plan aims to respond to the comments and recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through a consistent policy and appropriate measures.

The budget under the program "Support for Children and Families" annually provides significant financial resources for the payment of family benefits for children and benefits and funds provided as part of the work on child protection. The financial means under this program are provided entirely from the state budget. Currently, the financing of social services, delegated by the state is carried out in accordance with the Public Finance Act and the Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria for the respective year through municipal budgets. There is an annual increase in the standards for financing social services, which are delegated by the state activities.

The funds from the EU Structural Funds, including the European Social Fund, also make a significant contribution to supporting policies to support children and families through the implementation of various programs.

With regard to the Third Optional Protocol to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, a draft Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations received during the Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review before the UN Human Rights Council has been prepared in early 2022. According to the Plan, the following measures are envisaged, with a horizon of implementation December 2024: Detailed study of Bulgaria's readiness to accede to the Optional Protocol; if necessary, change in the relevant regulatory framework at national level; preparation of the ratification process of the Optional Protocol. The Plan is to be adopted by a Decision of the Council of Ministers.

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

Child Participation is attracting growing interest in the Czech Republic both in activities of public sphere and civil society.

Among other activities, the Czech Republic joined the EU-CoE Joint Project [CP4 Europe](#) - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe. The project and related measures to strengthen child participation in the Czech Republic are also included in a specific chapter of the National Strategy of the Protection of the Rights of the Child 2021 – 2029 as well as the 1st Action Plan for its Implementation 2021-2024.

For the international context, see information on a resolution on equal participation in political and public affairs under Thematic Area 6.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

The Czech Government will soon adopt the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Child Guarantee 2022 – 2030. It functions as an umbrella strategic document providing thorough description of the legal framework and current situation and data as well as enlisting other relevant strategic documents including concrete measures, responsible stakeholders and indicators for measuring progress.

It brings together measures of the following strategic documents:

- the Governmental Programme Statement;
- the National Strategy of the Protection of the Rights of the Child 2021 – 2029 and the 1st Action Plan for its Implementation 2021-2024;
- Family Policy Strategy;
- the Social Inclusion Strategy 2021 – 2030 and the Action plan for its implementation for years 2021 – 2023;
- Gender Equality Strategy 2021 – 2030;
- National Recovery Plan;
- Educational Policy Strategy 2030+;
- Strategy Health 2030;
- National Strategy on the Development of Social Services 2016 – 2025.

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

Deinstitutionalisation of care and transformation of the Czech child protection system towards family- and community-based care is one of the key objectives of the National Strategy of the Protection of the Rights of the Child 2021 – 2029 as well as the 1st Action Plan for its Implementation 2021-2024.

On 7th May 2019 Czech Republic adopted the [Action plan for the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence for the years 2019 – 2022](#). It provides 24 concrete measures that shall lead to more effective prevention of all forms of violence against women and more accessible assistance to victims of violence. The measures of the Action Plan are divided into three strategic areas: i) prevention, ii) protection and support of persons at risk (including children) and iii) ensuring access to justice. Ensuring the availability of specialized services for people at risk of violence and their children is one of the main priorities of the Action Plan. Action plan also includes measures to include the prevention of domestic and gender-based violence into education of pupils and students, minimize the time children grow up in a family at risk of violence, broaden the education of professions in contact with victims of domestic and gender-based violence and to raise awareness of the issue.

The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in cooperation with a Norwegian partner Alternative to Violence also carries out a project entitled „Enhanced Capacities and Methodological Support in Prevention of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (2020-2023)“⁴. The project focuses on

strengthening the capacity of the system for preventing and combatting domestic and gender-based violence. Specifically, it aims to ensure further dissemination of the film "Angry Man" which addresses cases of domestic violence witnessed by children. The Office of the Government provides trainings for professionals (social workers, psychologists etc.) on using a film Angry Man in order to develop their capacities and competencies to work with children suffering family violence. The film can be used by professionals in prevention or therapeutical work with children in order to raise awareness on family violence. In 2021, 150 professionals had already been trained, further trainings are scheduled for 2022 and 2023 with a total capacity of 600 professionals.

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

The Judicial Academy under the Ministry of Justice continuously enhances the offer of education for family-law judges. Among others, the 5th Family-Law Symposium bore the title Participation of Children within Guardianship Court Proceedings. The Conclusions of the Symposium summarise the basic principles of child participation within court proceedings and provide reasoning including relevant case law as well as practical guide on how to (and not to) communicate with a child and how to seek their views.

The Judicial Academy also provides on-site seminars for judges who cannot travel to regular symposiums due to capacity reasons.

Multidisciplinary discussions on the implementation of the Council of Europe's Recommendation on Children with Imprisoned Parents have commenced.

The Czech Republic joined the activities of the European Guardianship Network as a participant in 2021.

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

The first strategic objective of the [Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic 2030+](#) is to focus education more on the acquisition of competences needed for an active civic, professional and personal life. Among other measures, it includes ensuring the promotion of digital literacy for all pupils as well as supporting the digital competences of all teachers.

[Gender Equality Strategy 2021 – 2030](#) contains measures which encourage girls' participation STEM studies in general (education will tackle gender stereotypes) and through specific measures for children and STEM. Such as continuously increase the motivation and ability of career advisors at primary and secondary schools to offer pupils nonstereotypical fields of study or to support the projects of schools, NGOs and employers focused on motivating girls and women to study STEM fields and motivating boys and men to study medical, social and teaching fields.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

The protection and promotion of human rights, including children's rights, remains one of the key priorities of the Czech foreign policy. The Czech Republic builds its human rights policy on existing international commitments that create a universal framework for the protection of all internationally recognized human rights, including children's rights. The Czech Republic is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the Optional Protocols thereto. In 2021, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child discussed the combined fifth and sixth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention, and issued the Concluding Observations.

In line with the objectives stipulated in the Human Rights and Transition Promotion Concept, the Czech Republic supports and promotes children's rights, including children in armed conflict, within the United Nations and the Council of Europe and other international organizations and platforms. In this regard, the Czech Republic further supports the activities of UNICEF and contributes to the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of Child, as well as the EU Guidelines on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights and the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. Within the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council, the Czech Republic regularly formulates

recommendations towards other states aimed, inter alia, at preventing violence against children, sexual abuse and trafficking, and support of education.

In 2021, the Czech Republic (together with other EU Member States) co-sponsored a resolution on the rights of the child, adopted within the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. A similar resolution on the rights of the child, presented by the EU and GRULAC, is also on the agenda of the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council. Within the 47th session of the Council, the Czech Republic supported the resolution on realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, as well as the resolution on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls with disabilities. At the special session of the Council on Afghanistan in August 2021, the Czech Republic presented a national statement focused on the situation of women and girls and Afghanistan. During the 48th session of the Council, the Czech Republic co-sponsored the resolution on child, early and forced marriage in times of crisis, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the 48th session of the Human Rights Council, the Czech Republic together with Botswana, Indonesia, Peru and the Netherlands (core group), presented a resolution on equal participation in political and public affairs. The resolution focuses on the exercise of the right to participate in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic recovery, and recognizes the importance of genuine periodic elections. Among other things, it underlines the importance of the active, meaningful and inclusive participation of youth in decision-making and the important role that youth can play in the promotion of sustainable development and the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights, and the importance of removing barriers that prevent the meaningful participation of youth in public affairs.

The Czech Republic is further active with regard to the protection of the rights of children in armed conflict. In New York, the Czech Republic is a member of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, chaired by Canada. In May 2021, Czech representatives participated in a meeting of the UN Security Council in the Arria format, dedicated to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on children in armed conflicts, and joined the GoF joint statement. In September 2021, on the margins of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, the conference “Child Protection, Invisible Victims of Armed Conflict and Covid-19”, organized by Belgium, the EU, Niger and the NGO Save the Children, took place, with the participation of Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management.

The humanitarian aid of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, focused on the assistance to victims of conflicts, has increased significantly over the last five years. This form of assistance is aimed, inter alia, at internally displaced persons and refugees, including the most vulnerable groups (families with children and young people) who are at increased risk of recruitment, sexual abuse or human trafficking. In 2015 – 2021, the Czech Republic spent 875 million CZK on the assistance in these thematic areas in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Niger, Syria and Ukraine. In this regard, the Czech Republic supports particularly children in Ukraine and Moldova (refugees), as well as within the Afghan and Sahel crises.

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

The Czech Republic adopts a national strategy on the rights of the child and action plans for its implementation on a regular basis. It has also ratified all optional protocols to both UNCRC and UNCRPD. Finally, it has had a well-established system of interdisciplinary governmental committees monitoring the implementation of all UN Conventions from as early as 1990s.

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

Action plan against antisemitism published on January 22 2022

Focuses on strengthening knowledge among children and youth on holocaust and antisemitism. Also includes a youth-to-youth interreligious dialogue initiative.

Agreement on action plan against racism among a majority of Parliament on January 24 2022

Includes 8,2 mil. DKK in 2022 and 8,1 mil. DKK annually in 2023-2025 towards a strengthened effort against hate-crimes.

“Know your rights initiative”

Within the framework of the Children First Act, a strengthened effort towards teaching children and youth in alternative care homes their rights.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

National research programme on the quality of the Danish Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system

The Government and KL (Local Government Denmark) has initiated the first national research programme with the purpose of measuring the quality of the Danish ECEC system. The research programme will build on the Danish ECEC tradition as well as relevant data. The research will contribute with insight in the quality of Danish ECEC system, including the local conditions, pedagogical learning environments and its effect on children’s learning, development, well-being and formation.

Legal requirement for the basis for the municipal decision to postpone the enrolment in school

The Agreement on the Finance Act for 2022 allocates funds to provide more children the opportunity to postpone their enrolment in school if they are in such need. The purpose is to ensure the child’s well-being, learning and their readiness to begin school. Following the agreement, the ECEC leader shall assess the individual child’s needs in dialogue with the pedagogical educators, the parents and the school leader at the child's future school.

More qualified teachers

The Danish government decided in 2020 to allocate 275 mil. DKK in 2020, 400 mil. DKK in 2021, 550 mil. DKK in 2022 and 807 mil. DKK in 2023 and the following years to the Danish public schools. It has been decided that the money has to be spend on recruiting more qualified teachers to the public schools.

Dyslexia package I, II and III

In the last two years, the Danish government has reached three agreements that aim to strengthen the support of learners with dyslexia. Part of the package will focus on improving tools to discover that learners have dyslexia and education of so dyslexia-teachers.

New framework for evaluation and assessment

In 2021 the government reached a political agreement, which sets a new framework for evaluation and assessment, including individual learning plans and national tests. The agreement entails, among other things, that tests in reading and mathematics must be carried out at a number of grade levels from 2nd to 8th grade and a compulsory risk test for dyslexia in 1st grade.

The children first

The government reached an agreement in March 2022 to ensure a better school for placed children and young people. The agreement will aim to secure that placed children will receive the education they have legal right to receive.

The Ministry of Health is currently working on a comprehensive 10-year plan to permanently improve psychiatric care. The plan is based on a professional draft made by the Danish Health Authority, the National Board of Social Services, and a large number of organizations. In the professional draft presented by the before mentioned actors, one of the focus areas is children and young people.

Of the several, concrete initiatives that Denmark has undertaken, it is worth mentioning the operational support for “headspace” and the increase of distribution of centres. Headspace is an open, anonymous and free counselling service for young people between the ages of 12-25 who can use the centre’s staff and volunteers to discuss a wide range of problems, they are experiencing in their lives.

According to the Act on Health Care (sundhedsloven), the municipalities are responsible for ensuring children and young people's health and well-being. The municipal responsibility is managed through the following free measures:

- Health visitor/school nurse in primary and lower secondary education.
- Free dental treatment for children and young people below the age of 18.
- Rehabilitation following hospitalisation.
- Treatment of alcohol abuse
- Treatment of substance abuse

General practitioners, treatment at hospitals, and visits to the accident and emergency department are free. Furthermore, in Denmark, children entitled to a free childhood vaccination programme.

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

In 1997 parent’s corporal punishment of their children was banned by the Danish Parliament. In 1966-67 corporal punishment of children was banned in schools. The Danish Government has in January 2022 proposed that the penalty for repeating violence or aggravated violence against children in close relations should be increased. Furthermore, the government has proposed that repeating violence or aggravated violence against children in close relations in some cases should cause a reduction of social benefits. The proposal is currently being considered by the Danish Parliament. The proposal is part of the Danish Government’s initiative ‘Børnene Først’ (Putting Children First).

In 2021, a broad majority in the Danish Parliament entered into an agreement on a reform called “Børnene Først” (Putting Children First). The reform aims to, among other things, ensure that vulnerable children receive better and earlier efforts, fewer shift and more stability in placements, better quality in placements and in case planning practises and strengthened legal certainty. As a part of the reform “Børnene Først” (Putting Children First) the government and the parties to the agreement have entered into an agreement on a new “Barnets Lov” (The Children’s Act), where all regulation concerning support to vulnerable children is gathered. Furthermore, the new Children’s Act will provide the child with a number of new rights that aims to ensure that the voice of the child will be in the forefront in cases where special support is needed.

According to the current Consolidation Act on Social Services children already today have the right to help if they experience abuse and they will continue to do so in the future with the new Children’s Act “Barnets Lov”.

The new Children's Act ("Barnets Lov") will come into effect on April 1, 2023.

The missing children hotline has become effective in April 2022.

Links:

Link to the proposal (in Danish): [Lovforslag nr. L 113, Folketinget 2021-22, Forslag til Lov om ændring af udlændingeloven, straffeloven, lov om aktiv socialpolitik, repatrieringsloven og forskellige andre love \(Initiativer til beskyttelse af børn imod vold og negativ social kontrol, indførelse af regler om fleksibel udbetaling af hjælp til repatriering og hjemrejsestøtte m.v.\) \(ft.dk\)](#)

Link to the Danish Government's initiative 'Børnene Først' (in Danish): [Børnene Først – Et trygt hjem og flere rettigheder til udsatte børn, januar 2021 \(im.dk\)](#)

Link to the Consolidation Act on Social Services (in English): [consolidation-act-on-social-services.pdf \(sm.dk\)](#)

Link to the official act of the missing children hotline (in Danish): [Aktstykke nr. 224, Folketinget 2021-22, Aktstykke om hotline for forsvundne børn \(ft.dk\)](#)

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

In December 2021, an agreement of the economy of the Prison and Probation Service for 2022-2025 was made. It was agreed that better conditions for children with imprisoned parents must be ensured.

The political parties that entered into the agreement agreed on launching a number of measures to improve the conditions for children with imprisoned parents. This includes a system to ensure that children of imprisoned parents can communicate with their parents via video. It also includes establishment of visiting facilities and outdoor facilities in a number of prisons without these facilities. When establishing new buildings, the need for visiting and outdoor facilities must be considered.

Furthermore, it must be possible for prisoners to attend their own child's birthday until the child has reached the age of 18, as long as the prisoner has obtained permission to leave.

A children's panel will also be set up, in which the Prison and Probation service will meet continuously with relevant organizations, etc. to discuss the conditions of children with imprisoned parents.

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

In December last year, a broad majority in the Danish Parliament reached an agreement on a strengthened effort for digital education of children and young people (called "Aftale om styrket indsats for digital dannelse af børn og unge"). The agreement contains three initiatives that among other aims to teach our children and young people how to navigate safely on the Internet and development of teaching materials. 52.2 million DKK has been allocated to implement the agreement's initiatives in 2022-2025.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

The reform "Børnene Først" (Putting Children First) will ensure that children in vulnerable situations get more rights and that children's voice have a greater significance in case in cases where special support for children and young persons is needed. The reform contributes to the commitment on promoting and

protecting the rights of the child. The reform entails: Better and earlier efforts for vulnerable children and families; Fewer shifts and more stability in placements; more rights for vulnerable children (through “Barnets Lov” (The Children’s Act)); better quality in placements; better quality in case planning practises and enhanced legal certainty.

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

In the preparation of the reform “Børnene Først” (Putting Children First) and new Children’s Act (“Barnets Lov”), various stakeholders have been involved on an ongoing basis, and will continue to be involved in the further steps of implementation of the reform.

Denmark has ratified all UNCRC Optional Protocols and UNCRPD Optional protocols. The ratification of the optional protocols took place before the development of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

The Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are an integrated part of the ongoing policy development by the responsible ministries within the relevant areas.

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

The Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice launched a web-page on child-friendly justice⁸ for children and adolescents, their parents and professionals working with and for children. Also, chocolates with the web-page address and child-friendly justice logo, following the design of the page were produced and distributed to law-enforcement organisations all over Estonia for informing children of the web-page and by that helping to provide information to children in contact with the justice system.

Child-friendly justice information materials, booklets were printed in Estonian and Russian language. They are available as hard-copy and also electronically for children and their close-ones who participate in different proceedings. These information materials follow the same design as the web-page mentioned above. Booklets are for a) juveniles⁹ b) minor victims and witnesses¹⁰ and c) children whose family issues are solved by the court (civil matters)¹¹.

As training materials for professionals and also for the more general awareness-raising, the Ministry of Justice produced videos¹² on child-friendly justice both in Estonian and Russian. These have been distributed among child protection and law-enforcement specialist working with or for children. The videos have been shared also on social media platforms. In addition to the previous, a video was produced on child-friendly healthcare in Estonian and Russian¹³.

There are specialized prosecutors and judges working on juvenile cases. They have received, and continue regularly to receive, trainings on different aspects of working with juveniles. The aim is to ensure that people who work with juveniles are equipped with the right mindset, values, knowledge and skills necessary to support carrying out child-friendly justice. In addition to that, special positions were created in the Prosecutor's Office called Juvenile Consultants, whose job it is to support the prosecutors working on juvenile cases with anything related to networking with service providers in the context of alternative measures, support the youth and their families, where necessary, explaining the process to the juvenile, ensuring a seamless experience for the youth.

For flexible and continuous information sharing and for keeping up a professional community, there is a mailing list for judges working with criminal and civil matters, which are in some way related to children or juveniles. These lists are used for sharing information on trainings, information materials, etc.

There is a Criminal Policy Newsletter, composed by the Criminal Policy Department of the Ministry of Justice, which is shared with the above-mentioned mailing list of judges dealing with cases related to minors and juveniles.

In 2021, a special 8-months training program was launched for specialists working with youth in contact with the criminal justice system. It focuses on raising awareness, upgrading knowledge and skills, and empowering local-level networks better to cooperate in juvenile criminal cases.

Estonia won the right to host the annual European Congress of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect (ISPCAN). The event "Child Protection for the Most Vulnerable Children and Families", which is expected to draw 600 international delegates to the city, will be held in Tallinn from 13th until 16th of June 2022¹⁴.

⁸ <https://lapsesobralikmenetlus.just.ee/>

⁹ https://lapsesobralikmenetlus.just.ee/sites/default/files/inline-files/LapsSuudistatavana_A5_EST_preview.pdf

¹⁰ https://lapsesobralikmenetlus.just.ee/sites/default/files/inline-files/LapsTunnistajana_A5_EST_preview.pdf

¹¹ https://lapsesobralikmenetlus.just.ee/sites/default/files/inline-files/KohusLahendab_A5_EST_preview%20%281%29.pdf

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5JI001vz8bMFpyrX5YYBs2dr3tjOoNiX>

¹³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_tuj6zhOYY&list=PL5JI001vz8bMFpyrX5YYBs2dr3tjOoNiX&index=5&t=261s

¹⁴ <https://www.just.ee/en/news/registration-international-congress-child-protection-most-vulnerable-children-and-families-now>

The Office of Chancellor of Justices, also the Ombudsman for Children launched a compendium on “Children in the Estonian Society”¹⁵.

Judges talk about their work in schools. In cooperation with the „Back to School“ project we also made a video of the civil hearing, which can be followed by all students (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhFvPoq5Nt8>).

Organizing „A case competition“ for 9th-12th grade students (they resolve different court cases).

A video campaign for young people (six videos in total) in civil matters - different videos that may concern them. Alimony issues, borrowing from a friend, etc.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKIDcZx_rv4&t=22s
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXwbCJ7vBFk&t=26s>
- Video for schools about the Estonian court system: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgo_ouTiM-I&t=20s

Preparing a website for young people / teachers to make it easier to talk about court in school, in social studies class - videos, worksheets, tutorials.

The Ministry of the Interior

Ministry of the Interior has foreseen and started planning an intervention within the European Social Fund 2021-2027 aiming to develop a systematic and community-based involvement model for children and young people by expanding the consultation capabilities of non-governmental organisation consultants in order to undertake proactive activities aimed at local governments in different parts of Estonia, promoting inclusion processes as well as aiming the same activities at children and young people to better involve them in society. Activities will be started in 2023.

The Ministry of Education and Research

Most importantly, despite the effects of COVID-19, schools had remained open during 2021 and the right to receive supervised education at school was guaranteed. The student representative organization has been involved in decision-making on national regulations.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

The Ministry of Social Affairs

Estonia is renewing the Welfare Development plan for period from 2023 until 2030 which contains the key activities of child rights and family policies. The Welfare Development plan will include a valid programme for each field, which contains concrete measures and indicators to evaluate the achievements.

Estonia has finished the first National Action Plan implementing the European Child Guarantee. The National Action Plan describes the existing and planned measures in response to identified challenges. Children, relevant stakeholders and different ministries were involved in its preparation. The involvement of stakeholders will continue consistently (preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). The targeted categories of children in need are:

- Children with special needs;
- Children growing up in a single-parent household;
- Children in alternative care;
- Children involved in violence, abused and neglected children;
- Children with mental health problems.

¹⁵ <https://www.oiguskantsler.ee/et/ilmus-kogumik-lapsed-eesti-%C3%BChiskonnas>

In Estonia several integrated measures are taken that can help to improve access to services for children in need (some examples):

- In the coming years Estonia is developing and improving national accessibility for programs supporting family relationships and parent education. And not just for parents, but for young people as well. Also developing community-based prevention and family work centers at local level to provide integrated health and social services, consider the needs of the family in terms of support before and after the birth of the child.
- Renewing Estonia's child protection system to identify children in need more quickly and provide measures for assisting the child and family.
- Mental health action plan is being prepared.

Implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee and promote the involvement of young people in Youth Guarantee services

Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Education and Research has prepared Reinforced Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. Implementation plan will be approved by the government no later than the second quarter. The focus of the plan is to promote the involvement of young people who are in NEET-situation and NEET-risk of the youth guarantee services. Ministries are developing support system for young people in NEET-situation and NEET-risk at the local level. Main measures to reach the targetgroup are youth tracking system and youth work as proactive reaching measures. Measures to improve youth employment through wage subsidy and training are prepared. Reinforced Youth Guarantee will be main strategy to help and support young people who are in NEET-situation or NEET-risk.

The Ministry of Education and Research

In 2021 [Guidelines for teachers and youth work](#) on mental health of schoolchildren and young people were developed.

In 2021 the European Child Guarantee national action plan was in the preparation process and was finalised in 2022. The education sector focuses on free access to education and school-based activities and free food at schools.

During 2021 the preparation process for Youth Guarantee new action plan (2022-2027) started involving consultations with local governments, youth organisations, different ministries and state institutions, non-profit and employer organisations. From the Ministry of Education and Research perspective, the new action plan focuses more on prevention.

The [Youth Field Strategy](#) for 2021-2035, which is approved by Government, outlines the main strategic goals in the field of youth. The main goal introduced in the development plan is to provide young people with a wide variety of development opportunities, a sense of security, and strong support for young people creates an Estonian state that the youth wishes to further. One of the specific goal is to support young people in the development of a healthy lifestyle, including additional opportunities to move and engage in sports, raising awareness about the importance of a balanced diet and providing opportunities for mental health support.

During 2021 Ministry of Education and Research and Education and Youth Board in co-operation with wide partnership from both private and public sector initiated project with Government Office innovation team which focused on the children mental health. As a result 2 solutions were worked out which focus on the better cooperation between schools and parents and offering students break-hours with the focus on mental health. Both initiatives are being piloted in 2022.

In 2021, the [Estonian Education Strategy](#) (EES) for 2021-2035 was approved. The strategy has set objective to ensure flexible learning opportunities, accessibility of high-quality education and supported learning to reduce drop-out and early school-leaving rates and to exploit every individual's potential to the fullest.

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

The Ministry of Social Affairs

In order to improve Estonia's child protection system, the Ministry of Social Affairs is currently developing a new cross-cutting child protection organizational model. It includes development of relevant toolbox and assessment instruments for specialist working with children.

In 2021, the priority of the supplementary social budget was to increase the provision of welfare services and mental health support in the COVID-19 crisis. The additional budget increased the capacity of the Social Insurance Board to provide mental health crisis assistance by involving additional service providers. With the telephone line and web chat options (*Child helpline 116 111*), counselling was offered to the entire population to support their mental health, emotional coping and family relationships.

The Child Helpline (116 111) of the Social Insurance Board has piloted a new service, the personalized pre-booked counselling free of charge with the aim to secure initial follow-up support after first contact with the helpline. Counselling is provided to both children and their family members who need immediate follow-up support. The results of the pilot project have been promising and the service continues in 2022.

To promote family-based alternative care, additional developmental proposals will be completed in 2022. In 2021, activities to promote family-based substitute care from the European Social Fund continued, including the development of a foster families support system, the piloting of crisis and special care families, and wider information activities and campaigns to normalize family-based alternative care and to find new foster families.

The Barnahus service (children's house) in Estonia is expanding and preparations are underway to open the fourth children's house in 2022 in West Estonia. The children's houses work with victims of sexual abuse and provide services also to child victims of trafficking in case they have been sexually abused or exploited. In 2021 amendments to the Child Protection Act were prepared, regulating the operation and tasks of children's houses in Estonia. An important amendment is that the children's houses will begin to provide assistance also to children with sexually abusive behavior, in close cooperation with local child protection services, police and other institutions. The amendments should be adopted by the Parliament in spring 2022.

The Ministry of the Interior

Estonian government adopted in 2021 the Estonian Internal Security Strategy 2020-2030, which states prevention of violence as one of the main priorities. The aim is to move towards of situation where people are intolerant of violence, know how to notice it, and dare to react appropriately, including reporting violence. To reach the desired situation, the major courses of action are to promote public debate on violence in society and to implement evidence- or research-based prevention and intervention on a consistent basis. The strategy also focuses on protection of victims and witnesses, with specific focus on children. In reach for that goal, there is an agreement that all reports of violence are responded to, and all victims of violence receive assistance. Violence also occurs in online fora, where we aim to continue to ensure the online presence of the police, further develop it, and provide police support and guidance to detect violations as early as possible and respond to them. In educational setting, violence prevention programmes are being implemented which provide activities for young people to develop their social skills.

In police training, victim support and situation management skills and techniques are part of base learning programme. This programme also focuses on dealing in situations where children or people with specific vulnerabilities are involved.

The Ministry of Education and Research

In order to prevent bullying in schools and help schools with bullying cases, the Ministry of Education and Research provided 0,8 million to help organisations create a safe school environment through appropriate materials and school-based teachers training courses.

The Ministry of Justice

The AREV project (Advancing Rights of Estonian victims)¹⁶ was brought to life as a result of cooperation between the Ministry of Justice, Victim Support Europe, and the European Union and will last for two years (2021–2023). The project aims to offer better protection for victims of crime and to improve victim support services in Estonia.

- Together, during the project, the Ministry of Justice, the Police and Border Guard Board, the Social Insurance Board, the healthcare sector, and other stakeholders will develop and deliver:
 - specific tools for assessing the needs of a victim of crime, for the referral of victims from one service to another, for the better provision of information
 - processes to ensure the protection of victims of crime and to better support them
- Project targets:
 - Increase stakeholders' knowledge about each other's capacity and capability to deliver services and support for victims
 - Increase stakeholders' understanding of victims' needs
 - Improve referral to support services
 - Improve public awareness of victims' rights and services available to them
 - Encourage replication of project results in other EU Member States
- Activities (the project consists of six stages):
 - community needs assessment
 - stakeholder consultation
 - proposal for tools
 - training for professionals
 - implementation of tools
 - assessment & evaluation
- The outcomes of the projects will be achieved through the following activities:
 - research and data collection
 - mapping of existing victim support services
 - stakeholder seminars (primarily the police, victim support services and the healthcare sector)
 - development of tools for individual protection needs, referral, provision of required information
 - training of healthcare, law enforcement, and victim support experts
 - awareness raising campaign to inform public, as well as specific target groups, of project activities.

In 2021, the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with other partners (including psychologists etc.) composed “Guidelines for child-friendly environment in the justice system”¹⁷. This serves as basis for safeguarding children in contact with law enforcement (police, prosecutors office, courts etc.).

Violence Prevention Agreement 2021-2025¹⁸. The agreement was drafted by the Ministry of Justice in co-operation with a wide range of partners, victim assistance organisations, and practitioners in the field, taking into account expert assessments and recommendations from international organisations, as well as

¹⁶ <https://www.just.ee/en/crime-and-prevention-crime/advancing-rights-estonian-victims-arev>

¹⁷

https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/sites/krimipoliitika/files/elfinder/dokumentid/soovitused_lapsesobraliku_keskkonna_loomiseks_oiguskaitses_2021_0.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.just.ee/en/crime-and-prevention-crime/violence-prevention-agreement>

the results of research and implementation of the strategies for preventing violence to date. The agreement is approved by the Government of the Republic. The need to renew the agreement will be assessed annually. The agreement is the basis for planning and implementing violence prevention policies and activities. The Violence Prevention Agreement covers the prevention and combating of various forms of interpersonal violence. The main focus is on violence against children, while new topics include violence against the elderly and mental violence. Hate crimes, which have received less attention so far, have also been addressed to some extent.

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

The Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice launched a web-page on child-friendly justice¹⁹ for children and adolescents, their parents and professionals working with and for children. Also, chocolates with the web-page address and child-friendly justice logo, following the design of the page were produced and distributed to law-enforcement organisations all over Estonia for informing children of the web-page and by that helping to provide information to children in contact with the justice system.

Child-friendly justice information materials, booklets were printed in Estonian and Russian language. They are available as hard-copy and also electronically for children and their close-ones who participate in different proceedings. These information materials follow the same design as the web-page mentioned above. Booklets are for a) juveniles²⁰ b) minor victims and witnesses²¹ and c) children whose family issues are solved by the court (civil matters)²².

There are specialized prosecutors and judges working on juvenile cases. They have received, and continue regularly to receive, trainings on different aspects of working with juveniles. The aim is to ensure that people who work with juveniles are equipped with the right mindset, values, knowledge and skills necessary to support carrying out child-friendly justice. In addition to that, special positions were created in the Prosecutor's Office called Juvenile Consultants, whose job it is to support the prosecutors working on juvenile cases with anything related to networking with service providers in the context of alternative measures, support the youth and their families, where necessary, explaining the process to the juvenile, ensuring a seamless experience for the youth.

For flexible and continuous information sharing and for keeping up a professional community, there is a mailing list for judges working with criminal and civil matters, which are in some way related to children or juveniles. These lists are used for sharing information on trainings, information materials, etc. There is a Criminal Policy Newsletter, composed by the Criminal Policy Department of the Ministry of Justice, which is shared with the above-mentioned mailing list of judges dealing with cases related to minors and juveniles.

In 2021, a special 8-months training program was launched for specialists working with youth in contact with the criminal justice system. It focuses on raising awareness, upgrading knowledge and skills, and empowering local-level networks better to cooperate in juvenile criminal cases.

In 2018, changes in legislation took place to support Youth Justice Reform. This included Wider possibilities for police and prosecutorial discretion: warning, mediation, social programs, treatment, remedy for damage, "free content" obligation. It also led to punishment being opted as the last resort: punishment may be applied only if juvenile measures are not enough to prevent the further offences, shorter detention for misdemeanor cases. Imprisonment is the very last resort: juvenile detention may be substituted with placement to closed children institution. Court may apply juvenile measures also to young adults aged 18-21.

¹⁹ <https://lapsesobralikmenetlus.just.ee/>

²⁰ https://lapsesobralikmenetlus.just.ee/sites/default/files/inline-files/LapsSuudistatavana_A5_EST_preview.pdf

²¹ https://lapsesobralikmenetlus.just.ee/sites/default/files/inline-files/LapsTunnistajana_A5_EST_preview.pdf

²² https://lapsesobralikmenetlus.just.ee/sites/default/files/inline-files/KohusLahendab_A5_EST_preview%20%281%29.pdf

The specialization of judges in Estonia is optional in general and based on judges interests mainly. But according to the Courts Act the task distribution plan of judges must ensure specialisation of judges to cases involving minors and cases relating to insolvency.

The Supreme Court's Legal Information and Judicial Training Department has provided training sessions related to the rights of the child and child-friendly justice since the adoption of the Strategy in civil, criminal and administrative law field. In civil law, there was a round table between judges, attorneys, Social Insurance board and child protection workers on the topic of welfare of children in the parent's custody rights proceedings. The round table gave new ideas on further need on training the judiciary on the topic of parental alienation and the impact of it to the child. Also, a training session was held on the topic of social services the state can provide to the families in need – so the judiciary could also direct the parents in the path of finding suitable help in the hopes that sometimes this would mean in the end the situation does not need a judicial intervention. In a training session targeted to criminal and administrative law judges got an overview of the evaluation process of children's best interests, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the new procedural guarantees added to the national law concerning juvenile suspects and accused persons in criminal proceedings. In all the respective training sessions there is a goal to include in the discussions all the different essential institutions working with children, so the outcome would be as fruitful and would make a real difference in the field of children's rights.

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

The Ministry of Social Affairs

Despite the rapid growth of the ICT sector in recent years, the share of women among ICT specialists in Estonia is only 23%. To bridge the gender digital divide, it is crucial to take measures to increase the share of girls and women in ICT and to support teachers, parents, and employers in combating gender stereotypes. In recent years, we have turned to more innovative and research-based nudging approaches to find and test new methods to encourage girls to take interest in ICT. Results of these projects will be taken into account when planning and implementing ESF 2021+ measures to address gender segregation of educational choices and the labour market in both, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (the so called STEM) sector, and education, health and well-being sector.

In 2021 a study was concluded „Glass walls and glass ceiling in Estonian ICT: nudging to increase the share of women in ICT in education and the labour market“, which included a qualitative study. The main aim was to understand how girls and women feel about their decisions and careers in the ICT field and how the surrounding environment and influencers support or don't support their interests, development and identity in the ICT field. The results of the study inform policy measures in upcoming years to increase the share of women in the ICT sector. The study report is [available here](#) (in Estonian).

The Ministry of Education and Research

The national digital learning portal [eSchool bag](#) (open educational resource) has been continuously developed. The eSchool bag provides free teaching materials for all students and teachers, as well as a tool with which it is possible to create your own digital learning material. The study material contained in the eSchool bag complies with the valid curricula and has been evaluated by subject experts. The development of the eSchool bag will continue in the future.

All the actions taken to support digital competences are based on digital competences model for students or teachers which is adapted from *Digital Competence Framework for citizens*.

To support children's basic digital competences [self-assessment tool](#) for students has been developed. Teachers' digital competences [self-assessment tool](#) is further developed to reach more target groups.

To support students' digital competences, an online course for 3rd stage (7th-9th grade) students is being developed. The aim of the course is to develop the basic digital competences. Digital competences model's [assessment criteria's for early childhood education level](#) (3yrs-7yrs) were added.

[Teaching scenarios for will be developed](#) for all subjects in national curricula to support the development of students' digital competences. Actions were taken to spread the knowledge of Selfie for teachers.

To encourage children's and girls' participation in the field of IT, part of the activities of the ProgeTiger focuses on the integration of ICT into compulsory subject teaching.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

The Ministry of Education and Research

- <https://www.edtechestonia.org/ukraine>
- [Education Estonia](#)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Estonia stands globally for the protection of the rights of the child, focusing on the accessibility of education, combating violence, prohibiting the corporal punishment of children in all settings, and on the protection of children's rights in the digital society.

Further actions include:

- Supporting children's rights in the digital environment.
- Combating serious violations against children in armed conflict. For example, as president of the UN Security Council in June 2021 Estonia organized an open debate on children affected by armed conflict and in May 2021 Estonia organized an Arria formula Security Council meeting on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on grave violations against children affected by armed conflict. Estonia is supporting financially the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.
- Estonia is a member of the Executive Board of the UN Children's Fund UNICEF, one of the priorities is education and innovation is Estonia's. Estonia is also supporting UNICEF financially.
- Estonia supports the UNICEF Youth Agency Market Place (Yoma) initiative. Estonia highly values the work done with Yoma to promote entrepreneurship and innovation, along with enhancing digital skills and the use of innovative technology for the benefit of young people.
- To fulfil the role of EveryWomanEveryChild Global Advocate President Kaljulaid took up this role on 28.06.2021 and the mandate will last until July 2023.

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

The Ministry of Social Affairs

Estonian Government, the ministries and our numerous partners find it very important that we have constructive dialogue with the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Ensuring the rights of persons (incl children) with disabilities has always been among the highest priorities in our country. We do our best to achieve Committee's proposals on ensuring the wellbeing of children with disabilities and special needs.

The Ministry of Education and Research

In 2021, [the Estonian Education Strategy](#) and [Youth Field Strategy](#) for 2021-2035 were approved. Stakeholders and wider public have been involved in the strategy development through an (e-) consultation process.

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

Empowering children and young people to participate in political and democratic life has been one of the key goals of the Government Program (Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government in English, <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/government-programme>) during their term since 2019. Measures to enhance and develop child and youth participation have been implemented cross-administratively within the National Democracy Program, the National Youth Work and Policy Program and the National Child Strategy. Awareness of the rights, obligations and methods of equal participation of children and young people of public authorities will be increased in 2022 by updating the Guide to consultation in preparation of legislation with materials related to the consultation of children and young people, by producing training materials for authorities and by launching a challenge campaign to encourage authorities to increase and develop consultation with children and young people.

The Ministry of Justice is currently working on a legislative project to lower the age limit for the EU Citizens' Initiative to 16 years. The government's proposal is scheduled for September 2022, and the law is expected to enter into force on January 1, 2023.

In April 2022, the Ministry of Justice will launch a new online platform called Digiraati ("digital council") aimed especially at young people. The purpose of the new platform is to provide a reliable and secure channel for consulting children and young people and for dialogue between children, young people and decision-makers. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the maintenance and development of the platform, which has been produced in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (National Child Strategy), the ALL-YOUTH research project of the University of Tampere, the Center of Excellence for Youth Inclusion and the Finnish Red Cross.

As part of the Executive Plan of the National Child Strategy, a training package on the rights of the child with a particular focus on child participation is implemented for professionals.

The Right to Learn programme comprises projects for the development of the quality and equality of early childhood education and care and basic education. A total of 180 million euros will be allocated over a period of three years to the quality and equality programme for basic education entered into the Government Programme, and 125 million euros will be allocated to the quality and equality programme for early childhood education and care.

There are many references to the promotion of education for democracy and human rights in the current Government Programme. The overarching Democracy Programme refers to the importance of education for democracy and human rights, as well as in the National youth work and youth policy programme 2020–2023 and the Right to Learn Programme. The aim is to increase the participation of the pupils and the students in the decision making process in the schools and to develop education for democracy and human rights further. The ministry of education and culture appointed a steering group to implement the references on education for democracy and human rights and students' participation in the Government Programme. The aim of the steering group is to draw up proposals for action on this topic.

In 2021, a project was implemented to collect and disseminate good practices in democracy and human rights education. The outcomes of the project were published at the National Board of Education website in March 2022. As a follow-up to the good practices project, a set of pilot projects will be implemented in the school year 2022-2023, with the aim to test and develop various models and practices of democracy and human rights education at primary schools, in cooperation with teacher education institutions and local communities. The aim of the pilots is to develop and disseminate methods and good practices in

democracy and human rights education at national level to support the implementation of the national curriculum and local curricula. The National Board of Education published the call for proposals for pilot projects in March 2022.

In March 2022, a research project was launched with the aim of assessing the practical implementation of the objectives for democracy and human rights education defined in the national curricula in early childhood education, primary and secondary education, and in teacher education. The aim is also to assess the realization of the inclusion and participation rights of children, pupils and students. The study will be completed in spring 2023.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has launched a programme to develop the quality and education in Vocational training. "Right to competence" (Oikeus osata) programme aims to ensure the quality and develop Vocational training. The goals include also reduce gaps in learning outcomes that occur because of gender, socioeconomic background, place of living and special needs and increase non-discrimination and equality in Vocational training. This will be done by creating and sharing best practices and preparing legislative and financing changes that are needed.

There are four entities in the Programme: 1) To make learning outcomes and the conditions for learning better 2) To increase well-being, sense of community and participation 3) Renewing operational environment and supporting leadership and 4) Ability to reflect to changes in Operational environment.

Other examples of strengthening participation of children and young people:

In 2021, the National Rural Policy Resolution was prepared and young people participated in its preparation. Young people prepared their own policy recommendations which were given to decision-makers.

On 12.10.21, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry appointed the working group of the school meal Development Programme; School meal 2.0. which aims to prepare a development programme for school meals, to promote the practical implementation of the development proposals included in the programme and to promote cooperation related to school meals. In Finland, all children and young people have a right for free and substantial school meal. The establishment of the working group was based on a study by the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities that examined the current practices of snacks to be consumed and offered in comprehensive schools, good operating models for providing snacks, utilisation of the EU-school distribution system and school meals during the emergency conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study produced a comprehensive description of the current state of school meals. The working group will work on proposals for developing the above-mentioned research. The participation of children and young people in the development of school meals is encouraged, but structures for implementing participation vary in municipalities. These structures will be developed as part of the working group. The preparation of the programme should be completed in October 2022, and pupils must also be consulted during the work.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

The European Child Guarantee is implemented as part of the National Child Strategy. Please, see the thematic area 7.

Finland implements Youth Guarantee.

- The Nordic employment service model comes into force on May 2022. The focus is on early intervention and support of unemployed jobseekers.
- Finland has a wide network of One-Stop-Shops that offer holistic support for youth.

The National Mental Health Strategy 2020–2030 includes five focus areas: mental health as capital, building the mental health of children and young people, mental health rights, appropriate and extensive services, and good mental health management. Measures consistent with the objectives of the National Mental Health Strategy are implemented, among other things, as part of the Future Health and Social Services Centres programme and the Programme to Address Child and Family Services. They have improved, for example, the availability of counselling and early interventions at schools as well as the availability of preventive psychosocial interventions in primary social and health care. Parliament adopted the Government proposal for the reform of social and health services in June 2021. The reform will improve access to primary services, such as social and health care services. Activities in accordance with the reform will commence at the beginning of 2023.

There are several measures in place in the current government that aim to tackle school drop-out. The ministry of education and culture has launched an initiative for engaging school cooperation. The aim is to reduce and prevent absenteeism among pupils in basic education. The operations model will be developed in cooperation with the municipalities and the schools and the aim is to consolidate it in 2023-2024. With the help of the model, positive school culture will be created. The target group is pupils in 5-9th grade in basic education and the staff working with them. This is also part of the action plan to prevent bullying. The national model is prepared based on local pilot projects and evaluation based on development. Special emphasis is put on the cooperation with parents and guardians. The overall aim is to find an effective, national and permanent model, which will reduce school absenteeism and strengthen both the adherence and wellbeing of the students and the school personnel.

One of the important initiative of the current government is the extension of the compulsory education. The aim of the Government Programme is that, having completed their comprehensive school education, all students gain an upper secondary qualification. The minimum school leaving age was raised to 18 years. In addition, student guidance and student welfare services will be improved, along with the capacity of comprehensive schools to provide everyone with the skills to complete upper secondary education. The Upper secondary education will become free for Students until the end of the year they turn 20.

The extension in compulsory education is effective since 2021 and effects children born in year 2005.

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

Prevention of violence

National Action Plan for the Lanzarote Convention for the years 2022-2025 will be published on 26.4.2022. It includes 33 measures , for example raising awareness of Convention, how to protect children and how to enhance the participation and awareness of children and young people. Abstract of the publication: The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health appointed a working group to formulate Finland's first Action Plan for the Lanzarote Convention (Finnish Treaty Series 87-88/2011) to prevent sexual violence against children and young people aged 0–17. The formulation of the Action Plan is included in the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government. The Action Plan was prepared through extensive cooperation with a range of operators. The preparation work was closely linked with the preparation of the National Child Strategy, and it also involved a pilot project to include young people in the preparation of the Action Plan. The Action Plan takes account of other ongoing national work relevant to the matter, such as the Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children, entitled Non-Violent Childhoods, and the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Efforts were also made to avoid any overlap with them. The Action Plan includes a total of 33 measures, which are divided into three themes: the prevention of violence, the protection of children against violence, and the promotion of

national and international cooperation against sexual exploitation and sexual violence. The Action Plan draws attention to prevention in all situations and aims to nurture the sense of hope that exists even in the most difficult situations. The Action Plan will be implemented in 2022–2025. The aim was to draw up the measures of the Action Plan in such a way that various operators could take part in them either through their own actions or in partnership with other operators. The working group which drew up the Action Plan will now continue its work as a working group monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan.

As part of the third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights, Finland has developed an indicator framework with the aim to provide systematic data on the realization of rights, also children's rights, in Finland. We aim to develop tools and capacities for monitoring through data collection and research in the field of fundamental and human rights and we have included indicators regarding children. For example, we have indicators regarding children as victims of violence or crime, right to self-determination in child welfare institutions, and more broad indicators regarding child welfare and child poverty, to mention a few (all indicators can be found in our National Action Plan). Through systematic data collection and the analysis of data, the Finnish policy makers and authorities can make informed decision regarding combatting violence against children and ensuring adequate child protection measures.

Tackling bullying

The Government Programme has set out the ambitious goal of a zero tolerance rule against bullying and to offer school staff and students training for recognising and tackling bullying. Attention will also be paid on preventing and recognising discriminatory bullying. The identified best practices will be extended nationally and the continuation of effective projects will be secured.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has prepared a comprehensive action plan to prevent bullying, teasing, violence and harassment in schools and educational institutions. The Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health formulated the measures for the action plan. The programme is based on the entries in the Government Programme on non-discrimination, on the right of every child and young person to physical integrity and on zero tolerance for bullying at school. All measures under the action plan will be implemented during this term.

Promoting wellbeing, fostering a peaceful working environment, and endorsing pedagogical competence related to preventing loneliness and bullying are the priorities in the action plan over the next three years for further training of staff and management in early childhood education and care and in schools. Equally, the provisions on bullying and harassment in the Act on General Upper Secondary Education and in the Act on Vocational Education and Training should be made more specific. The measures to prevent bullying and teasing must also tie in with municipal youth services. The core competence of youth work involves encountering young people. Bullying and teasing takes place outside school time, too (leisure time, recreational activities, etc.). Youth workers encounter students and young people outside school, which is why it is important to introduce the methods and practices used by youth workers into schools and educational institutions. It is proposed that the action to tackle bullying be started already in early childhood education and care. According to the action plan, a separate programme will be needed to strengthen emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills in early childhood education and care. The programme would focus on strengthening these skills in children as a means of preventing bullying and teasing in early childhood education care and in pre-primary education.

In June 2020, the Ministry of Justice launched a two-year REC funded project called All in for Equality. The main objective of the project is to tackle discrimination and harassment of people belonging to ethnic and religious minorities in Finland. Expected results are increased awareness of the cultural and societal barriers and structural discrimination, as well as increased preparedness for majority population to react on discrimination and harassment. This will be done with the following actions:

- raising awareness of the bias leading to structural discrimination in different spheres of the society

- supporting educational institutions in their task to promote equality
- increasing knowledge and awareness of employers' and professionals in the employment sector on non-discrimination and diversity
- developing tools and methods for bystanders and professionals to react and intervene in discrimination and harassment
- strengthening the Finnish Diversity Charter by developing new tools for the network
- strengthening sense of belonging and participation for young people belonging to ethnic and religious minorities
- enhancing trust towards public authorities.

The project is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, and the project partners are the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman's office, The Finnish League for Human Rights, The Finnish Business & Society and the City of Helsinki.

In March 2022, the parliament has approved the government bill to improve pupils' and student's rights in safe learning environment and give more tools to schools to tackle bullying in schools. At the same bill the obligation to take into consideration the best interest of the child in education and learning in Basic Education, General upper secondary education and Vocational Training. This obligation has existed already in the Early Childhood Education and Care act.

Child protection

As part of the implementation of the National Child Strategy, a pilot strengthening the participation of children and young people in drafting the Child Welfare Act was carried out in the spring of 2021. The aim of the pilot concerning the consultation of the child was to strengthen the right of children and young people who are child welfare clients to participate in the evaluation of their services and to increase their knowledge of the regulation concerning their status and rights, including the relevant objectives. Children and young people were consulted on pre-selected topics. Furthermore, the pilot aimed to create a model for consulting children and young people in legislative work. A publication on modelling the consultation of children and young people in bill drafting (Handbook for law drafters on hearing the views of children, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163428/VNK_2021_6.pdf?sequence=1) was published in September 2021.

Leaving care is developed for example in the project called Together into adulthood – Moving forward in life (YEE) in 2020–2023. It is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) 2020–2023 and coordinated by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. Supervising Authority is the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. It focuses on the support and services provided for young people in child welfare aftercare as well as unaccompanied minors who have applied for asylum in Finland. The YEE project aims at putting into practice their financial, social, educational and health care rights as well as to prevent inequality and social exclusion, and to advance equality and participation also under the pandemic circumstances. It amplifies coordination and young people's participation in developing the service and activities. Peer networks of experts by experience function, and young people participate in the development processes. Co-development forums are created to be able to influence the reform of the practices.

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

The Council of Europe's Recommendation on children with imprisoned parents has been translated into Finnish. In 2019, the Finnish Criminal Sanctions Agency updated the guidelines for child and family work, which took into account the guidelines of the Council of Europe. Finnish Criminal Sanctions Agency has provided training on the guidelines and Council of Europe recommendations.

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

In autumn 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the New Literacies Programme for 2020-2023, which is part of the Ministry's wider Right to Learn programme.

The New Literacies Programme aims to strengthen children's and young people's media literacy, competence in information and communications technology (ICT), and programming skills in early childhood education and care, pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education.

In spring 2021, the programme published descriptions of targeted competence in ICT, media literacy and programming skills. The descriptions of competence are based on the national core curricula for early childhood education and care and those for pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. The National Audiovisual Institute and the Finnish National Agency for Education are jointly responsible for developing the descriptions.

Descriptions of good and advanced competence were produced for each year class in primary and lower secondary education. Descriptions of good pedagogical practices were prepared for early childhood education and care and for pre-primary education. The descriptions promote the realisation of equity when teaching children and young people digital skills and competence in the whole of Finland.

The descriptions serve as support material, building on the core curriculum for early childhood education and care and on the core curricula for primary and lower secondary education. They are not binding; instead, their purpose is to support teachers in their work in implementing the curricula for early childhood education and care and in primary and lower secondary education as well as for use in the development of local curricula.

The Cyber Security Development Programme has completed. The primary aim of the Programme is to create a cyber security ecosystem in Finland that will provide vitality and growth, create jobs in the sector, increase necessary expertise and improve both the sustainability of the digital society and its resilience to the different phenomena in the cyber security environment. The resolution and the action plan promoting its policies were prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Transport and Communications and in cooperation with representatives from more than 80 organisations. The Development Programme is part of the implementation of the Finnish Cyber Security Strategy 2019 and the EU Cyber Security Strategy. The Development Programme is a concrete action plan for developing cyber security in long term and across sectors. It covers years 2021–2030. The Development Programme includes measures focusing on children and young people. In primary education, the aim is to guarantee that children have sufficient skills to operate in digital environment and they understand the risks of cyber security and they would know how to avoid those risks. In early childhood education, the aim is to make basic knowledge how to apply safely products and services of digital society. Furthermore, girls and other unrepresented groups are encouraged to get interested in cyber sphere by developing learning lanes.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

(no specific contribution received)

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

The National Child Strategy and its first implementation plan

Finland's first National Child Strategy was published on 23 February 2021 and it, like the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, is based on the commitments of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The preparatory parliamentary committee considered it important to execute the National Child Strategy

methodically and by combining different branches of government and areas of society. With regard to the implementation, it must be ensured that strategy work is integrated into the central government's strategic planning and decision-making, and that permanent structures are created for the work to support implementation.

The parliamentary committee defined the strategy around three main ideas:

1. The strategy must result in a Finland that is genuinely sympathetic to children and families and respects the rights of the child.
2. Children's rights and status must be established, ensuring that children are consistently taken into consideration in all policies and activities alongside other members of society, and that they are informed of their rights.
3. Vulnerable children must be protected and their needs better identified.

The committee stated that the preparation, execution, and monitoring of the implementation plan must be coupled with carefully selected indicators to track the effectiveness of the strategy's policies and the measures to implement them during each government's term. The implementation's progress must be monitored regularly and the impact during a government's term must be reported.

Every future government must prepare and execute a detailed implementation plan to implement the policies of the National Child Strategy during its term. The first implementation plan of the National Child Strategy was approved by the Government on 7 October 2021. Authored by the government of Prime Minister Sanna Marin, the implementation plan will remain in effect until the end of the government's term in spring 2023.

The implementation plan covers the currently ongoing central government measures and projects that advance the policies of the strategy. In addition, it includes 30 separate measures. The plan also includes measures for creating the coordination structures for implementing the European Child Guarantee. The European Child Guarantee is implemented as part of the National Child Strategy.

The National Child Strategy and its first implementation plan were prepared by a cross-branch working group of public officials with representatives from the Ministries of Social Affairs and Health, Education and Culture, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Environment, Agriculture and Forestry, Employment and the Economy, Transport and Communications, and Finance. The working group's term continues until 30 March 2023. In addition to the working group, the preparation and implementation have been supported by the National Child Strategy's monitoring group with representatives from key stakeholders and authorities.

The child's right to be heard and participation in the community and society

The National Child Strategy's objective is to consider the inclusion of children and their right to information and to be heard systematically in decisions and activities that directly or indirectly concern them. The content and significance of the children's views must be specified in the justification of decisions. The National Child Strategy aims to expand the idea of "matters belonging to children" and to cross boundaries between administrative branches, because reinforcing the inclusion of children also requires cooperative structures for authorities and other actors.

The preparation of the strategy and its first implementation plan have improved the means for inclusion and hearing to allow different children to feel heard and seen. Children have been heard by using different methods: electronic surveys in several languages and different workshops in cooperation with NGOs.

The National Child Strategy also delegated the hearing of children with regard to the preparation of the Council of Europe (CoE) Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022–2027 in 2021.

The National Child Strategy's measures aim to improve the inclusion of children and young people and their awareness of their rights. The measures also emphasise communicating children's rights and welfare to the professionals, decision-makers, and parents who work with children.

Status of the National Child Strategy in society

The Child Strategy rooted in fundamental and human rights provides a sustainable and consistent basis for protecting and promoting children's rights and wellbeing. The Child Strategy built on a sound legal basis creates the potential for implementing child rights in a way that guarantees their full realisation in the best possible way in each specific situation.

The Child Strategy will provide the framework for a sustainable, consistent and durable child policy. 'Child policy' refers to all of the decisions and actions taken by public authorities that concern and affect children. Furthermore, the Child Strategy will influence business and civil society operations and society as a whole, including families and local communities. Creating a durable and sustainable child policy requires anchoring the policy in fundamental and human rights and their active implementation.

Implementing the Child Strategy calls for national legislation supportive of the strategy and allocation of resources to strategic measures. It requires up-to-date research and indicator data on children's wellbeing. Other important aspects of strategy implementation include the knowledge, competence and management of professionals working with children.

The Child Strategy's eleven thematic areas relating to child rights were determined on the basis of recommendations issued to Finland by human rights monitoring bodies (figure 1). In particular, the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the child played an important role in the definition. The thematic areas help structure and outline Finland's obligations, which require solutions for implementation to be identified as part of the work on the Child Strategy. The Legal basis and the background for the National Child Strategy is described in a publication of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Reports and Memorandums of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2020:20).

Finland has ratified all UNCRC Optional Protocols and UNCRPD Optional protocols.

Financial resources

The National Child Strategy's funding is six million euros. Work on the National Child Strategy will continue until the end of the government term until the end of the implementation plan for the National Child Strategy and other work supporting the activities.

In the National Child Strategy, the parliamentary committee emphasised the importance of importance of continuity and long-term commitment. Objectives of the strategy and implementation of the vision and Finland's human rights obligations full implementation requires the implementation of the strategy, monitoring and assessment credited to be effective over government terms the Strategy Unit. The unit must be provided with sufficient resources.

Figure 1. The status of the Child Strategy as the basis for decision-making and actions concerning children, encircled by the themes to be taken into account in the strategy.

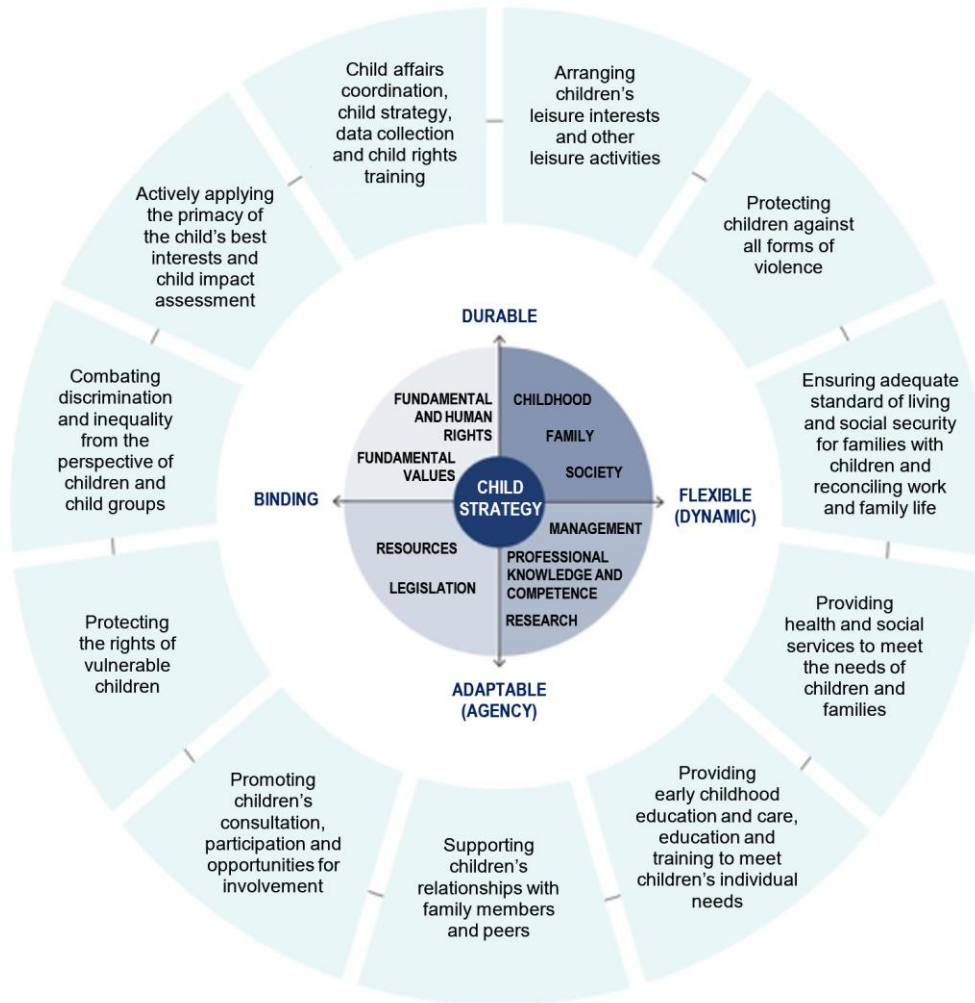


Figure 1. The status of the Child Strategy as the basis for decision-making and actions concerning children, encircled by the themes to be taken into account in the strategy.

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

Créé en 2016, le **Haut Conseil de la famille, de l'enfance et de l'âge (HCFEA)** est une entité indépendante placée auprès du Premier ministre qui a pour missions d'animer le débat public et d'apporter aux pouvoirs publics une expertise prospective et transversale sur les questions liées à la famille et à l'enfance. Les questions liées à l'enfance sont étudiées avec le **collège des enfants** du HCFEA composé de douze membres.

Les acteurs publics peuvent solliciter auprès du Haut-Conseil la consultation des enfants du collège pour le développement des stratégies et des politiques qui les concernent.

A ce titre, en **2021**, le Collège des enfants a été saisi par le Secrétariat d'Etat chargé de l'enfance et des familles pour participer à **l'élaboration de la Stratégie du Conseil de l'Europe pour les droits de l'enfant 2022-2027**.

En **2022**, ces derniers ont participé à **l'élaboration du plan national d'action de mise en œuvre de la Garantie européenne pour l'enfance**. Leur contribution a permis de dresser un constat réaliste de la perception et des enjeux de l'exclusion sociale pour les enfants ainsi que de formuler des propositions concrètes et adaptées, fondées sur leurs besoins réels. Le plan envisage ainsi une participation active du collège des enfants pour l'élaboration des nouvelles mesures, de leur suivi et de leur évaluation.

Dans le même esprit, **seize enfants européens, âgés de 7 à 17 ans** ont participé à la **conférence ministérielle sur la Garantie européenne pour l'enfance**, organisée dans le cadre de la **Présidence française du Conseil de l'Union européenne**, le 4 mars 2022 à Paris. Lors de cet événement, pour l'organisation duquel les enfants ont collaboré, ces derniers ont **pu échanger avec les ministres européens chargés de l'enfance**, apporter leur témoignage, poser des questions et émettre leurs suggestions sur la déclinaison concrète de la Garantie.

Plus largement, en France, **l'école** républicaine, gratuite, accessible à toutes et tous, et désormais obligatoire dès 3 ans, est un lieu d'éducation à la citoyenneté. Des cours d'éducation civique y sont dispensés.

En **mars 2022**, un **label Égalité filles-garçons a été créé pour les établissements du second degré**. Il vise à rendre visible l'ensemble des actions engagées dans les domaines pédagogique et éducatif en faveur de l'égalité, qu'il s'agisse des enseignements ou de la vie scolaire et de la démocratie scolaire. Il en permet la coordination et l'approfondissement. Il en assure la lisibilité auprès de l'ensemble de la communauté éducative.

S'agissant de la prise de décision locale, le **projet de loi Égalité et citoyenneté**, adopté à l'Assemblée nationale en première lecture le 6 juillet 2016, reconnaît **l'importance des conseils de jeunes dans les collectivités territoriales**. Les conseils de jeunes (7 à 25 ans) doivent leur permettre d'exprimer leurs opinions sur les projets des collectivités locales en lien avec la jeunesse, voire de proposer de nouveaux projets.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

[Alimentation : il est recommandé aux États membres de garantir aux enfants dans le besoin un accès effectif à une alimentation saine]

La loi du 30 octobre 2018 pour l'équilibre des relations commerciales dans le secteur agricole et alimentaire et une alimentation saine, durable et accessible à tous (EGALIM), complétée par la loi EGALIM 2 d'octobre 2021, a notamment consacré la nécessité d'appréhender la lutte contre la précarité alimentaire de façon globale. Un plan d'action pour la transformation de l'aide alimentaire et la lutte contre la précarité alimentaire a été lancé en juillet 2021. Ses objectifs sont :

- La réponse aux besoins essentiels de se nourrir et de nourrir les siens ;
- Le développement des actions permettant davantage d'autonomie et de dignité des personnes ;
- L'amélioration de la qualité nutritionnelle de l'alimentation ;
- Le respect de l'environnement.

De nombreux dispositifs, mis en œuvre par l'Etat, les collectivités locales et les associations, permettent de mettre à la disposition des ménages fragiles une aide alimentaire indispensable. Le FSE+ vient ainsi en aide aux ménages les plus touchés par ces problématiques, via des aides à l'achat de denrées alimentaires fléchées vers 4 grandes associations françaises (Croix Rouge, Restos du cœur, Secours populaire, et Fédération française des banques alimentaires). Ce sont 869m€ qui y ont été consacrés au titre de l'enveloppe 2021-2027.

Afin de lutter contre les privations alimentaires des enfants en leur apportant au moins un repas complet et équilibré par jour, plusieurs mesures ont été mises en place dans le cadre de la Stratégie de lutte contre la pauvreté à compter de 2019, notamment les petits déjeuners gratuits à l'école ou la "cantine à un euro".

La lutte contre la précarité alimentaire vise aussi à assurer des **produits de qualité et dont la traçabilité est garantie en restauration scolaire**. Plusieurs mesures législatives récentes visent ces objectifs :

- 50% de produits durables et de qualité, dont 20% de produits issus de l'agriculture biologique au 1er janvier 2022 (loi EGALIM) ;
- 60% de produits durables et de qualité pour les viandes et poissons au 1er janvier 2024 (loi climat et résilience) ;
- Depuis le 1er mars 2022, l'origine de la viande servie dans toute la restauration hors domicile (dont les cantines scolaires) doit être indiquée.

Comme cela est prévue par la loi « Climat et résilience » de 2021, une **nouvelle stratégie nationale de l'alimentation, de la nutrition et du climat** prendra la suite du PNAN à compter de 2023 en amplifiant leurs objectifs.

Enfin, la lutte contre la précarité alimentaire passe aussi par l'accès à des équipements de cuisine. En 2021, 68 tiers-lieux – fixes ou mobiles- ont été retenus dans le cadre d'un appel à projets favoriser l'accès à l'alimentation des familles hébergées à l'hôtel. Outre leur vocation première qui est de mettre à disposition des équipements de cuisine, ces espaces visent à favoriser le décroisement des secteurs de l'aide alimentaire, de l'hébergement et de l'accompagnement social pour une meilleure prise en compte des besoins alimentaires des personnes en situation de précarité, notamment des enfants.

[Santé : il est recommandé aux États membres de garantir aux enfants dans le besoin un accès effectif et gratuit à des soins de santé de qualité]

Garantir un **meilleur accès des enfants à la santé**, notamment en milieu scolaire :

- Création d'un **Projet d'accueil individualisé pour raison de santé en 2021**, proposé aux enfants scolarisés pour lesquels il est nécessaire d'aménager le temps scolaire ou de prévoir par exemple des prises médicamenteuses ;

- **Amélioration du suivi de la santé mentale** des enfants, avec un objectif de création dans les territoires des « **maisons des enfants** », chargées de la sensibilisation et de la coordination des acteurs de la santé mentale et physique des 3-11 ans, ainsi que de l'accueil et l'orientation des enfants et de leurs familles, dans une approche globale de la santé des 3-11 ans. Un **projet pilote sera lancé dès 2022, afin d'envisager les conditions d'une généralisation en 2024**
- Plusieurs dispositifs permettent d'assurer **l'information du grand public sur la santé mentale, et notamment des jeunes et des enfants**, comme la campagne de communication et d'information pour les jeunes de 11-17 ans déployée par Santé Publique France en 2021 (#JEnParleA).
- **Suite à la crise Covid** un dispositif destiné aux enfants et adolescents de 3 à 17 ans en souffrance psychologique a été mis en place, reconduit puis pérennisé en 2022. Il prévoit une prise en charge psychologique adaptée aux besoins de l'enfant ou du jeune, réalisée par un psychologue, dans la limite de 10 séances prises en charge à 100% par l'Assurance Maladie, sans avance de frais.

Une attention accrue est accordée aux **publics rencontrant des problématiques spécifiques** :

- Amélioration de la **prise en charge médicale des jeunes confiée à l'aide sociale à l'enfance**. De nombreuses expérimentations sont mises en place pour garantir leur accès à la santé, comme le programme « Pégase », concernant les enfants de moins de 5 ans dont le parcours de santé est mieux coordonné. Ce programme est complémentaire du programme santé protégée qui vise à améliorer la santé globale des enfants et adolescents protégés de 0 à 18 ans, l'expérimentation inclut les jeunes suivis par la protection judiciaire de la jeunesse dans un département ;
- **Meilleur repérage et suivi des enfants victimes de violences**. Le plan interministériel sur les violences faites aux enfants (2018) prévoit le renforcement du repérage en milieu scolaire et extrascolaire des violences, notamment des violences sexuelles intrafamiliales, ainsi que la création d'équipes référentes en pédiatrie et l'augmentation du nombre d'unités d'accueil et d'écoute pédiatriques spécialisées, pour améliorer le repérage et la prise en charge des enfants victimes et couvrir l'ensemble du territoire d'ici 2022. Dans ce cadre, depuis 2019, 8 unités d'accueil pédiatrique enfants en danger (UAPED) ont été créées et 12 unités sont en cours de création ;
- **Promotion de la santé des mineurs sous main de justice**. Depuis 2013, la direction de la protection judiciaire de la jeunesse (DPJJ) promeut la démarche « PJJ promotrice de santé » dans l'objectif principal d'améliorer la santé globale des jeunes pris en charge en agissant sur l'ensemble des déterminants de santé accessibles. L'engagement conjoint avec la direction générale de la santé a été renouvelé par la signature d'une charte de partenariat 2022-2026. De plus, en complément des orientations quinquennales, une feuille de route santé/justice 2019-2022 a été élaborée et vise notamment la promotion de la santé mentale, la prévention du suicide et l'accès à des soins, la prévention des conduites addictives. Un bilan de santé est également proposé de façon systématique aux mineurs détenus, il est aussi très fortement préconisé pour tous les mineurs suivis par les services de la PJJ. Un projet « Prévention des conduites addictives et promotion de la santé » est également conduit afin d'élaborer une stratégie nationale d'intervention auprès des jeunes. Enfin, la PJJ participe au déploiement de la stratégie nationale multisectorielle des compétences psychosociales 2022-2026 du ministère de la santé, avec l'élaboration d'une feuille de route commune avec la DGCS pour les enfants de l'ASE.

[Education : il est recommandé aux États membres de garantir aux enfants dans le besoin un accès effectif et gratuit à la scolarisation]

L'accès et la réussite à l'école de l'ensemble des enfants passe notamment :

- Par un **accompagnement financier particulier à destination des familles défavorisées** : par exemple, l'allocation de rentrée scolaire permet ainsi d'aider ces ménages à assumer le coût de la rentrée. Elle a été versée en 2021 à environ 3 millions de familles, ce qui représente 5 millions d'enfants;

- Par un effort spécifique en faveur de la scolarisation des enfants en situation de handicap. A la rentrée 2021, plus de 400 000 enfants en situation de handicap étaient scolarisés, soit plus de 100 000 par rapport à la rentrée 2016.

Au sein même de l'école, la qualité de l'éducation et la prise en compte des besoins des enfants ont été renforcés. Au-delà des mesures telles que l'instruction obligatoire à trois ans ou le dédoublement des classes de grande section de maternelle, de CP et de CE1 en réseau d'éducation prioritaire, une nouvelle impulsion a été donnée en 2021 à l'initiative des « cordées de la réussite », lesquelles visent à faire de l'accompagnement à l'orientation un réel levier d'égalité des chances en luttant contre l'autocensure. En 2021-2022, 200 000 élèves, contre 80 000 en 2019, devraient bénéficier d'actions déployées dans le cadre de plus de 800 Cordées de la réussite.

C'est aussi tout l'environnement éducatif, au-delà des seuls temps scolaires, qui a été repensé, avec :

- La poursuite du déploiement du dispositif « Devoirs faits » lancé en 2017, dont l'objectif est de faire bénéficier les collégiens d'une aide appropriée au sein du collège (avec notamment la mise à disposition d'un assistant numérique) . Le dispositif a été étendu aux écoles situées dans les territoires ultramarins à partir de la rentrée 2019 ;
- Le programme « vacances apprenantes » lancé en juin 2020 a été reconduit en 2021 et 2022 (dont font partie les dispositifs Ecole ouverte et les Colos apprenantes). Il concerne en priorité des enfants et jeunes venant des quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville et issus d'un milieu social défavorisé ou en décrochage scolaire ;

Enfin, les politiques d'éducation visent à accorder une attention particulière tant aux publics fragiles qu'aux territoires défavorisés.

- Depuis janvier 2019, et grâce au recrutement de 40 médiateurs scolaires en 2020 (portés à 50 à la rentrée 2021), 4 556 enfants de familles résidant dans des bidonvilles en France ont été scolarisés. Dans le cadre du changement d'échelle du soutien apporté aux territoires dans les actions de **résorption des bidonvilles, il a été décidé de faire de la scolarisation un axe prioritaire. Les objectifs pour 2022** marquant cette nouvelle ambition sont de : (i) doubler le nombre d'enfants scolarisés et accompagnés dans leur scolarité ; (ii) scolariser tous les enfants dont les familles bénéficient d'actions d'accompagnement. Cette action doit également se déployer dès **2022 davantage dans les territoires ultramarins.**
- Par ailleurs, le détail des actions menées en faveur de la **scolarisation des enfants Roms et des enfants de gens du voyage** figurent enfin dans la Stratégie française 2020-2030 en réponse à la recommandation du Conseil de l'Union européenne du 12 mars 2021 pour « l'égalité, l'inclusion et la participation des Roms ».

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

La lutte contre les violences s'inscrit dans une politique et stratégie globales couvrant tous les domaines des droits de l'enfant.

Un Pacte pour l'enfance (2019) est construit autour de trois axes : (i) la stratégie « 1000 premiers jours » ; (ii) le plan interministériel de mobilisation et de lutte contre les violences faites aux enfants (2020-2022) qui comprend 22 mesures (voir question 20) ; (iii) la stratégie nationale de prévention et de protection de l'enfance (2020-2022) pour les enfants faisant l'objet d'une mesure de protection afin de renforcer la prévention des violences, normaliser les parcours des enfants protégés, accorder une importance accrue à la parole de ces enfants et favoriser leur intégration à la société.

Les châtimens corporels sont interdits en France depuis la loi n° 2019-721 du 10 juillet 2019 relative à l'interdiction des violences éducatives ordinaires. Considérant que la violence n'est pas un mode d'éducation, la loi prévoit que les titulaires de l'autorité parentale doivent l'exercer sans violence et ne doivent pas utiliser la violence physique (fessées, etc.), verbale ou psychologique, les châtimens et l'humiliation à l'encontre de l'enfant. Au-delà de cette interdiction, la répression des infractions d'atteintes à l'intégrité physique (ou à la vie) d'une personne est aggravée lorsque les faits sont commis sur la personne d'un mineur âgés de moins de 15 ans.

La loi n° 2021-478 du 21 avril 2021 visant à protéger les mineurs des crimes et délits sexuels et de l'inceste crée quatre nouvelles infractions, à côté des infractions traditionnelles réprimant le viol et les agressions sexuelles (ces infractions continuent de s'appliquer aux situations non couvertes par les 4 nouvelles infractions spécifiques) :

- Le crime de viol sur mineur de moins de 15 ans, par une personne majeure ayant une différence d'âge d'au moins 5 ans
- Le crime de viol incestueux sur mineur de moins de 18 ans, ces deux crimes sont punis de 20 ans de réclusion criminelle.
- Le délit d'agression sexuelle sur mineur de moins de 15 ans par une personne majeure ayant une différence d'âge d'au moins 5 ans), étant précisé que l'atteinte sexuelle constitutive de ce délit peut être commise par un tiers sur la victime ou bien commise par la victime sur elle-même.
- Le délit d'agression sexuelle incestueuse sur mineur de moins de 18 ans.

Pour ces quatre infractions, la démonstration d'une violence, contrainte, menace ou surprise n'est plus exigée.

Pour ce qui est de l'inceste, la question du consentement ne se pose plus, dès lors que la victime est mineure, c'est-à-dire âgée de moins de 18 ans ; le mineur ne sera jamais consentant. La loi également étend le périmètre de l'inceste aux grands oncles et grandes tantes.

Les délais de prescription des infractions sexuelles commises sur les mineurs ne courent qu'à compter de la majorité des victimes. La nouvelle loi dispose que le délai de prescription d'un viol (30 ans), d'une agression sexuelle ou d'une atteinte sexuelle (10 ou 20 ans) commis sur un mineur peut être prolongé si le même auteur commet l'une de ces infractions sur un autre mineur. Dans ce cas, le délai de prescription est prolongé jusqu'à la date de prescription de la nouvelle infraction.. En outre, la prescription du délit de non-dénonciation est portée à 10 ans à compter de la majorité de la victime en cas d'agression ou d'atteinte sexuelle et à 20 ans à partir de la majorité de la victime en cas de viol.

La nouvelle loi crée le délit de « sextorsion », c'est-à-dire « le fait pour un majeur d'inciter un mineur, par un moyen de communication électronique, à commettre tout acte de nature sexuelle, soit sur lui-même, soit sur ou avec un tiers, y compris si cette incitation n'est pas suivie d'effet ». Ce délit est réprimé d'une peine de 7 ans d'emprisonnement et 100 000 euros d'amende, les peines sont aggravées (10 ans d'emprisonnement et 150 000 euros d'amende) si les faits sont commis sur un mineur de 15 ans.

La lutte contre la prostitution des mineurs est également renforcée, puisque la différence d'âge de 5 ans n'est pas exigée pour que soient caractérisées les infractions nouvelles et spécifiques de viol et agression sexuelle imposés par un majeur à un mineur de 15 ans. En outre, est sanctionné par 20 ans de réclusion criminelle et de 3 000 000 euros d'amende le proxénétisme commis à l'égard d'un mineur de quinze ans.

Enfin, les personnes condamnées pour des infractions sexuelles sur mineurs seront inscrites dans le fichier judiciaire des auteurs d'infractions sexuelles ou violentes (FIJAISV). Les juridictions peuvent prononcer

des peines complémentaires d'interdiction d'exercer une activité bénévole ou professionnelle au contact d'enfants à titre définitif.

Une **commission indépendante sur l'inceste et les violences sexuelles faites aux enfants (CIIVISE)** a été annoncée par le Président de la République le 23 janvier 2021 et installée le 11 mars 2021 par le Secrétaire d'Etat Adrien Taquet avec, pour enjeu principal et transversal, le recueil de la parole des victimes.

En outre, la **loi du 7 février 2022** relative à la protection des enfants prévoit l'élargissement du **contrôle des antécédents judiciaires** du personnel exerçant dans le champ social et médico-social aux personnes bénévoles et intervenants occasionnellement auprès des mineurs. Dans le même sens, l'agrément d'assistant familial ne pourra pas être accordé si l'une des personnes majeures ou mineures âgées d'au moins treize ans vivant au domicile du demandeur, à l'exception de celles accueillies en application d'une mesure de protection de l'enfance, est inscrite au fichier judiciaire automatisé des auteurs d'infractions sexuelles ou violentes.

Par ailleurs, cette même loi prévoit que tout mineur qui se livre à la prostitution est réputé en danger et doit être protégé par les services de l'aide sociale à l'enfance.

Un groupe de travail réunissant les ministères et acteurs de la vie civile concernés a été mis en place en octobre 2020 pour lutter efficacement contre la prostitution des mineurs. Un **rapport** des ministères de la Justice, des Solidarités et de la Santé et de la procureure générale de Paris a été remis au Secrétaire d'Etat en charge de l'enfance et des familles le 28 juin 2021, formulant des recommandations et préconisant 100 mesures pour lutter contre ce phénomène. Il a donné lieu au lancement le **15 novembre 2021 du premier plan national de lutte contre la prostitution des mineurs**, qui se déploiera dans son intégralité en 2022, avec un engagement financier de 14 millions d'euros. Le ministère de la Justice est étroitement associé à la mise en œuvre de ces mesures

Le plan prévoit treize actions regroupées en cinq domaines prioritaires à mettre en œuvre selon un calendrier prédéfini :

- (1) Sensibilisation et développement des connaissances, prévoyant des interventions de sensibilisation et de prévention dans les communautés, les familles et les établissements d'enseignement, ainsi que des recherches pour comprendre l'ampleur du phénomène, y compris parmi les mineurs non accompagnés ;
- (2) Renforcer l'identification des mineurs en situation de prostitution en développant la formation dans tous les secteurs ciblant spécifiquement les écoles, la santé, les hôtels et les logements locatifs, la rue et les plateformes en ligne ;
- (3) Protéger et accompagner les mineurs prostitués par la création de systèmes d'hébergement dans chaque département du territoire, qui proposeraient différents types d'hébergement en fonction des besoins du mineur ;
- (4) Poursuivre les auteurs en nommant des magistrats référents dans chaque tribunal spécialisé dans la prostitution de mineurs, en renforçant les cyber-enquêtes et en établissant des coopérations formelles avec des plateformes de logements locatifs dans le pays et dans l'UE au sens large ;
- (5) Mettre en place un pilotage national au niveau territorial mettant en présence tous les acteurs concernés au sein de l'éducation, de la santé, du secteur privé, de la protection sociale, des conseils départementaux, de la justice...

L'action 6 du plan national de lutte contre la prostitution des mineurs vise à agir sur les réseaux sociaux, notamment via le développement de procédures de repérage, de modération et de signalement. L'action 12 vise à renforcer la mobilisation des services d'enquête en matière de cybercriminalité et l'action 13 à formaliser la coopération judiciaire auprès des plateformes d'hébergement locatif.

Le plan national de lutte contre la prostitution des mineurs en a fait sa priorité n°4 « Accélérons les procédures contre les auteurs ». Il compte 3 actions : faciliter les poursuites judiciaires au moyen notamment d'un magistrat référent par tribunal, renforcer la mobilisation des services d'enquête dans le

domaine de la cybercriminalité et formaliser la coopération judiciaire auprès des plateformes d'hébergement locatif.

Ce plan national de lutte contre la prostitution des mineurs poursuit une priorité 2 intitulé « Soyons plus vigilants ». Elle comporte l'action 4 visant à développer la formation territoriale croisée des professionnels afin de construire une culture professionnelle commune qui facilitera le travail en réseau. De même l'action 5 a pour objet le repérage et le signalement des mineurs en situation prostitutionnelle dans les établissements scolaires, dans les hôtels et sur les plateformes d'hébergement locatifs ainsi que dans la rue, en proposant des outils adaptés.

Par ailleurs, ce plan a permis la mise en œuvre d'une recherche-action pluridisciplinaire sur la prostitution des mineurs dont les résultats ont été diffusés le 28 février 2022 et qui a donné lieu à la construction d'un certain nombre d'outils (notamment des kits vidéos de sensibilisation à destination des professionnels).

Concernant les mineurs victimes de traite des êtres humains (TEH), ce plan a permis de favoriser l'extension du dispositif expérimental parisien de protection de ces mineurs et de créer un premier centre sécurisé de douze places pour les accueillir.

Enfin, un meilleur repérage et suivi des enfants victimes de violences est recherché. Le plan interministériel sur les violences faites aux enfants (2018) prévoit le renforcement du repérage en milieu scolaire et extrascolaire des violences, notamment des violences sexuelles intrafamiliales, ainsi que la création d'équipes référentes en pédiatrie et l'augmentation du nombre d'unités d'accueil et d'écoute pédiatriques spécialisées, pour améliorer le repérage et la prise en charge des enfants victimes et couvrir l'ensemble du territoire d'ici 2022. Dans ce cadre, depuis 2019, 8 unités d'accueil pédiatrique enfants en danger (UAPED) ont été créées et 12 unités sont en cours de création.

La prévention et en particulier la protection des enfants sur internet passe également par un développement des moyens de signalement. La plateforme Net écoute, de l'association e-enfance, est un dispositif national de protection des mineurs sur internet et d'alerte permettant de signaler toutes problématiques liées à l'usage du numérique. Ce dispositif est en lien direct avec les réseaux sociaux, la plateforme de signalement Point Contact, les plateformes Pharos de la Police nationale, Brigade numérique de la Gendarmerie nationale, et le 119-Enfance en danger. Net écoute est notamment compétente pour signaler les contenus illégaux repérés en ligne et demander leur retrait aux différentes plateformes et réseaux en moins de 24 heures. Cette plateforme intervient notamment avec le soutien de la Commission européenne dans le cadre du programme *Safer Internet*.

La direction de la protection judiciaire de la jeunesse a signé une convention de partenariat avec e-Enfance pour communiquer sur l'existence de ce dispositif et sensibiliser les professionnels prenant en charge des mineurs aux problématiques liées à la cyber-violence.

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

L'article préliminaire du code de justice pénale des mineurs, entré en vigueur le 30 septembre 2021, dispose que la responsabilité pénale des mineurs est mise en œuvre en tenant compte, dans leur intérêt supérieur, de l'atténuation de cette responsabilité en fonction de leur âge, de la nécessité de rechercher leur relèvement éducatif et moral par des mesures adaptées à leur âge et leur personnalité, et de la spécialisation des juridictions et des procédures.

Ce code reprend les grands principes spécifiques, qui ont valeur constitutionnelle, applicables à la procédure pénale des mineurs : l'atténuation de la responsabilité pénale en fonction de l'âge, la priorité de l'action éducative par rapport aux mesures répressives grâce à la mise en œuvre de mesures éducatives adaptées à l'âge et la personnalité du mineur, l'utilisation de procédures spécialement applicables aux mineurs et la spécialisation des juridictions compétente en la matière.

Ce code reprend l'ensemble des dispositions spécifiques aux mineurs, jusque-là disséminées dans l'ordonnance du 2 février 1945 relative à l'enfance délinquante, dans le code de procédure pénale et dans plusieurs décrets autonomes. Elles sont donc aujourd'hui rassemblées dans un corpus unique et structuré. La réforme a notamment pour objectif de concilier l'exigence d'impartialité du juge des enfants avec la continuité du suivi des mineurs, d'adapter encore davantage et de rendre plus lisible la procédure pénale aux spécificités des mineurs en restant cohérent avec les principes constitutionnels qui caractérisent la justice des mineurs.

I. Une nouvelle procédure respectueuse des principes directeurs applicables aux mineurs

Pour en finir avec l'allongement des délais de jugement et redonner du sens à la peine, le CJPM introduit une nouvelle procédure, encadrée dans des délais clairs. Cette nouvelle chronologie permet au mineur de se projeter dans un temps déterminé, et à l'équipe éducative d'assurer un meilleur suivi du jeune, puisque la nouvelle procédure de mise à l'épreuve éducative encadre désormais la réponse pénale dans des étapes claires et des délais contraints. La nouvelle procédure de mise à l'épreuve éducative se décompose en trois phases :

- Tout d'abord, le jugement sur la culpabilité, qui intervient dans un délai de 3 mois maximum contre près de 18 mois en moyenne sous l'empire de l'ordonnance de 1945 : ce jugement statue sur la culpabilité, et statue sur l'indemnisation des victimes dès ce stade ;
- S'ouvre alors, une période de mise à l'épreuve éducative de 6 à 9 mois maximum, durant laquelle le juge des enfants peut ordonner des mesures d'investigation sur la personnalité, une mesure judiciaire provisoire unique, souple et adaptée à la personnalité du mineur autour de quatre modules, ou des mesures de sûreté.
- Enfin, un jugement sur la sanction dans un délai de 12 mois maximum suivant l'engagement des poursuites : la sanction est éducative en première intention, et répressive par exception. Elle est décidée en fonction de la personnalité du mineur et de son évolution depuis la première audience.

II. Une refonte de la prise en charge éducative

A cet égard, le code de la justice pénale des mineurs procède à une refonte complète des mesures éducatives applicables au mineur en créant une mesure éducative unique, modulable et adaptable dans le temps en fonction des besoins du mineur (mesure éducative judiciaire). Cette réforme constitue donc également un remodelage de l'action éducative, autour de l'insertion, la réparation, la santé, et le placement du mineur.

Le mineur déclaré coupable d'une infraction pénale peut faire l'objet de mesures éducatives, et, seulement si les circonstances de commission des faits et sa personnalité l'exigent, de peines. De plus, un mineur de moins de 13 ans ne peut faire l'objet de peine, conformément aux grands principes tels que l'atténuation de la responsabilité pénale en fonction de l'âge, et la priorité de l'action éducative par rapport aux mesures répressives.

A l'atténuation de la responsabilité pénale du mineur en fonction de son âge, est ajoutée par le code de la justice pénale des mineurs, une présomption de non discernement des mineurs âgés de moins de 13 ans, et, corrélativement, une présomption de discernement des mineurs âgés d'au moins 13 ans.

En tout état de cause, la « sanction » tend au relèvement éducatif et moral, ainsi qu'à la prévention de la récidive.

Ainsi, organisée afin de prendre en compte la spécificité des mineurs et leur évolution, la procédure pénale applicable aux mineurs est différente de celle applicables aux adultes.

III. Alternatives aux poursuites et à la détention

Le code de la justice pénale des mineurs, tout comme la procédure pénale française en général, poursuit l'objectif d'un plus grand usage des alternatives aux poursuites, ainsi que des alternatives à la détention.

Concernant les alternatives aux poursuites

Le mineur âgé de moins de 13 ans ne peut faire l'objet d'une alternative aux poursuites que s'il ressort des éléments de la procédure qu'il est capable de discernement. Les mesures prévues par l'article 41-1 du code de procédure pénale sont applicables aux mineurs, ainsi que des mesures spécifiques (accomplissement d'un stage de formation civique ou consultation d'un psychiatre et d'un psychologue,

mesure de réparation pénale, justification de son assiduité à un enseignement ou une formation professionnelle), prévues par l'article L. 422-1 du code de la justice pénale des mineurs.

Il ressort également de la loi du 8 avril 2021, améliorant l'efficacité de la justice de proximité et de la réponse pénale, la priorité donnée aux alternatives aux poursuites : en ajoutant plusieurs mesures susceptibles d'être prononcées en réponse à la petite délinquance, le panel des mesures alternatives à la disposition des procureurs de la République est aujourd'hui amplement diversifié. Il s'agit notamment de permettre d'ordonner l'interdiction de rencontrer la victime ou ses coauteurs, la réparation du préjudice de la victime ou de toute personne ayant eu à engager des frais (par exemple une collectivité locale), la remise en état, ou le versement d'une contribution dite citoyenne à une association agréée d'aide aux victimes.

Concernant les alternatives à la détention :

- Le code de la justice pénale des mineurs opère un durcissement des conditions de recours aux mesures de sûreté, particulièrement la détention provisoire, dont les effets désocialisants, notamment pour les mineurs, sont largement reconnus. La détention provisoire ne peut être prononcée ab initio que sous certaines conditions : dans le cadre de l'instruction, et dans le cadre de la saisine du TPE aux fins d'audience unique lors d'un défèrement. En dehors de ces hypothèses, la détention provisoire ne peut résulter que de la révocation d'une mesure de contrôle judiciaire ou d'une ARSE.

- Principe de la priorité de la réponse éducative, qui prévoit qu'un mineur déclaré coupable d'une infraction pénale peut faire l'objet de mesures éducatives, et, seulement si les circonstances et sa personnalité l'exigent, de peines. Ce n'est donc qu'en dernier recours que le mineur peut faire l'objet d'une peine d'emprisonnement et d'une incarcération. En ce sens, le code de la justice pénale des mineurs prévoit qu'une peine d'emprisonnement, avec ou sans sursis, ne peut être prononcée par le tribunal pour enfants ou la cour d'assises des mineurs qu'en étant spécialement motivée.

Enfin, concernant la justice restaurative, le code de la justice pénale des mineurs énonce expressément la possibilité de proposer pour la victime et l'auteur de l'infraction de recourir à la justice restaurative, en parallèle de la procédure pénale impliquant un mineur, sous réserve que les faits aient été reconnus. Tant au stade des alternatives aux poursuites que dans le cadre de la procédure de jugement, des mesures permettent d'assurer une prise en compte des victimes (mesure de médiation ou de réparation).

L'ordonnance du 25 mars 2020, portant adaptation de règles de procédure pénale sur le fondement de la loi du 23 mars 2020 d'urgence pour faire face à l'épidémie de covid-19 a adapté les règles de procédure pénale en tenant compte de la particulière vulnérabilité des mineurs. Ses dispositions étaient applicables jusqu'au 24 juin 2020 uniquement.

L'article 16 de l'ordonnance a notamment prévu une augmentation de plein droit des durées de détention au cours de l'instruction. Cette prolongation de plein droit était strictement encadrée, possible uniquement pour les mineurs de plus de 16 ans en matière criminelle ou s'ils encouraient une peine d'au moins sept ans d'emprisonnement, détenus au cours d'une procédure d'instruction ou devant être jugés à l'issue de celle-ci. Cette prolongation ne pouvait s'appliquer qu'une fois au cours de chaque procédure.

Cette prolongation n'était pas applicable aux délits instruits par le juge des enfants et aux mineurs de 16 à 18 ans qui encouraient moins de 7 ans d'emprisonnement.

La circulaire du 26 mars 2020 présentant les dispositions de l'ordonnance du 25 mars 2020 a appelé l'attention des juridictions pour mineurs et des services éducatifs « sur la nécessité accrue de recourir prioritairement aux mesures alternatives à la détention provisoire, et revoir systématiquement la situation des mineurs actuellement en détention provisoire pour proposer, quand elle est possible, une mise en liberté accompagnée de mesures de sûreté ». Il y avait ainsi 804 mineurs détenus au 1er janvier 2020, 780 mineurs au 1er avril 2020, 670 au 1er juillet 2020.

Notons que la décision n°2020-878/879 QPC du Conseil constitutionnel du 29 janvier 2021 a déclaré contraires à la Constitution les dispositions de l'ordonnance n° 2020-303 du 25 mars 2020 relatives au maintien de plein droit de la détention provisoire dans le contexte d'état d'urgence sanitaire, en ce que la nécessité de ce maintien ne faisait l'objet d'aucun contrôle par un juge judiciaire. Ces dispositions ont alors été immédiatement abrogées. Néanmoins, le Conseil constitutionnel a estimé que « la remise en

cause des mesures ayant été prises sur le fondement des dispositions déclarées contraires à la Constitution méconnaîtrait les objectifs à valeur constitutionnelle de sauvegarde de l'ordre public et de recherche des auteurs d'infractions et aurait ainsi des conséquences manifestement excessives ». Les prolongations ordonnées en application de l'article 16 susmentionné n'ont donc pas été remises en question. L'absence d'annulation rétroactive de toutes les prolongations effectuées de plein droit n'a pas eu un fort impact s'agissant des mineurs dans la mesure où la période d'application de l'ordonnance (du 26 mars 2020 au 11 mai 2020) a été courte et dans la mesure où les conditions d'application pour les mineurs étaient très restrictives.

IV. Sur la tutelle des mineurs non accompagnés (MNA) :

Du fait de l'absence de ses parents, la question de la représentation légale du mineur se pose :

- Dans le cadre des procédures d'asile, l'article L343-2 du CESEDA prévoit que lorsqu'un MNA, non autorisé à entrer en France, est maintenu en zone d'attente, un administrateur ad hoc doit obligatoirement être désigné sans délai par le procureur de la République. Ce dernier représente le mineur dans les procédures administratives et juridictionnelles mais n'exerce pas les attributs de l'autorité parentale.

- une tutelle, prononcée par le juge aux affaires familiales chargé des tutelles pour les mineurs, peut être ouverte à l'égard d'un MNA en l'absence de ses parents. Celle-ci est déferée au conseil départemental. Dans le cadre de la tutelle départementale, les frais d'entretien et d'éducation des mineurs sont pris en charge par l'ASE et ils peuvent bénéficier d'un accompagnement éducatif et administratif.

Dans le cadre des Etats généraux du placement (EGP), la situation des MNA est particulièrement prise en compte. Les travaux ont débuté au début de l'année 2020 avec pour objectif de dresser un état des lieux et faire des propositions afin d'améliorer le dispositif de placement judiciaire. En effet, depuis plusieurs années, des difficultés de prise en charge de publics complexes (pathologies psychiatriques, radicalisation...) et de déploiement d'actions dans la durée sont rapportées. Des inadéquations entre l'offre proposée (notamment les hébergements en hôtels) et les attentes des magistrats sont par ailleurs parfois rapportées. Les EGP visent en outre à réfléchir à la lisibilité des différentes modalités de placement, aux problèmes d'articulation avec les autres établissements et services ainsi qu'à l'adaptation et l'évolution des locaux

En 2021 des « Etats généraux du placement judiciaire » ont abouti. Ils visent à dresser un état des lieux des types et modalités de placement pour dégager des axes de réflexion quant à l'amélioration de la prise en charge.

Promotion de la santé des mineurs sous-main de justice. Une feuille de route 2019-2022 a été élaborée et vise la promotion de la santé mentale, la prévention du suicide et l'accès à des soins psychiatriques. Un bilan de santé est également proposé de façon systématique aux personnes détenues, y compris personnes mineures détenues.

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

[Accès aux technologies]

Le déploiement du numérique à l'école a été accéléré en réponse à la crise de la covid-19.

- Sous l'égide de l'Éducation Nationale, **PIX est un service en ligne qui permet d'évaluer son niveau de maîtrise des connaissances et des compétences numériques.** Il s'agit d'un outil pédagogique des plus utiles, accessible aux parents et à leurs enfants (à partir de la 4e).
- **L'éducation aux médias et à l'information fait désormais partie des programmes scolaires, dès le cycle 4.** Une façon d'éveiller l'esprit critique des élèves face à un monde numérique dont ils ne perçoivent pas toujours les ressorts et les dangers.

- **L'Espace numérique de travail (ENT)** est un ensemble de services numériques mis à disposition d'un établissement scolaire. Chaque ENT comprend notamment un **cahier de texte numérique, une classe virtuelle, un logiciel de suivi des notes**. C'est aussi un canal complémentaire de lien entre parents et l'équipe éducative. Véritable prolongement numérique de l'école, ces espaces sont aujourd'hui **généralisés dans près de 8 départements sur 10**.
- **Le réseau de création et d'accompagnement pédagogiques est un opérateur public présent sur l'ensemble du territoire**. Il joue un rôle dans la refondation de l'école en intervenant notamment sur le numérique éducatif. Réseaux Canopé a également proposé des **ressources et formations dans le cadre de la continuité pédagogique**. Il a ainsi mis à disposition une **bibliothèque de ressources en lien avec les programmes pour assurer la continuité scolaire**

[Déconstruction des stéréotypes et accès des filles aux technologies]

Une attention particulière est portée aux milieux scolaire et universitaire qui constituent des environnements clés.

En **2019**, la **Convention interministérielle pour l'égalité dans le système éducatif** a été renouvelée pour cinq ans. Elle dégage plusieurs axes d'intervention tels que la formation du personnel, la lutte contre les violences et cyberviolences sexistes et sexuelles ou encore la politique d'orientation en faveur d'une plus grande mixité des filières et métiers. Elle engage tous les ministères ayant la responsabilité de politiques éducatives.

Le **ministère de la Culture travaille avec les éditeurs scolaires** afin de promouvoir dans les manuels la place des femmes dans les sciences et les arts.

A l'occasion de la **Journée internationale des droits des femmes**, des événements célèbrent les femmes créatrices, artistes ou chercheuses.

Les médias contribuent à la fabrication de normes structurant la société. Lancé en 2015 et soutenu depuis 2021 par le ministère chargé de l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes, le site internet « **Expertes France** » vise à rendre les femmes davantage visibles dans les médias. Cet **annuaire en ligne gratuit recense des expertes françaises et francophones sur tous types de questions dont le numérique**. Les expertes s'engagent à répondre aux sollicitations des journalistes, mais aussi des collectivités ou entreprises à la recherche d'une intervenante pour un débat, une conférence ou un colloque.

La **fondation « Femmes@numérique »**, créée en **2018**, agit pour la sensibilisation des jeunes filles aux métiers du numérique, la valorisation des rôles modèles et l'accompagnement des carrières, du recrutement à la reconversion.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

Would you like to share any relevant updates of the actions at the global sphere undertaken by your Member State?

S'agissant de l'atteinte des cibles spécifiques des ODD, la France exerce la présidence de l'Alliance 8.7, partenariat mondial et multipartite visant à mettre fin au travail des enfants, au travail forcé, à la traite des êtres humains et aux formes contemporaines de l'esclavage. A ce titre, elle a versé une contribution volontaire de 2 Millions d'euros en 2019 à l'OIT qui assure le secrétariat de l'Alliance. En novembre 2021, la France a lancé une Stratégie nationale d'accélération pour accéder au statut de « Pays pionnier » de l'Alliance 8.7. Cette stratégie a été élaborée par la déléguée du Gouvernement à l'Organisation internationale du Travail (OIT), en partenariat avec les administrations concernées, des réseaux d'entreprises, les partenaires sociaux français, des ONG et associations de terrain, ainsi que des organisations européennes et internationales.

En janvier 2020, la France est devenue pays pionnier du Partenariat mondial pour mettre fin à la violence faite aux enfants, coalition internationale ambitieuse dans l'atteinte de l'ODD 16.2, démontrant une volonté politique forte et une grande implication dans l'activité du Partenariat.

La loi n°2021-1031 du 4 août 2021 de programmation relative au développement solidaire et à la lutte contre les inégalités mondiales contribue à la promotion des droits de l'homme et des droits de l'enfant dans l'action extérieure de la France.

S'agissant en particulier de la réponse aux conséquences de la crise sanitaire.

Au niveau international, l'Agence française de développement (AFD) a réorienté une partie de ses financements dans le secteur de l'éducation pour soutenir les plans de riposte des gouvernements, et a été choisie pour être l'agent délégataire des fonds d'urgence Partenariat mondial pour l'éducation au Sénégal, au Niger, et au Burkina Faso. Le PME, dont la France est l'un des principaux bailleurs, a mobilisé près de 500 M USD de fonds d'urgence pour accompagner les pays partenaires qui faisaient face à la fermeture des écoles consécutive à la pandémie.

La France a encouragé la coordination globale des acteurs de l'éducation pour surmonter la crise éducative autour de la Coalition mondiale pour l'éducation mise en place par l'UNESCO, sous l'égide du Comité directeur de l'ODD 4. Afin d'assurer la continuité pédagogique durant la pandémie, le projet Imaginecole a été lancé, mis en œuvre par l'UNESCO et l'opérateur public français Réseau Canopé, avec l'appui financier de la France et en partenariat avec la CONFEMEN et l'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). Il cible en priorité dix pays d'Afrique francophones.

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

Les droits fondamentaux garantis par la CIDE tels que le droit à la scolarité, le droit d'être protégé par l'autorité judiciaire et le droit à être entendu sont garantis par l'Etat. Les droits liés aux prestations sociales s'effectuent indirectement par le biais d'organismes de sécurité sociale tels que la Caisse nationale d'allocations familiale (CNAF). Les politiques territoriales de protection de l'enfance relèvent de la compétence des services de l'Aide sociale à l'enfance, gérés par les conseils départementaux.

Le Pacte pour l'enfance est construit autour de trois axes : la stratégie « 1000 premiers jours », qui cible les points clés du développement de l'enfant (du 4ème mois de grossesse aux deux ans de l'enfant), pour mieux accompagner les parents et agir en faveur de l'égalité des chances. Le deuxième pilier repose sur le plan interministériel de mobilisation et de lutte contre les violences faites aux enfants (2020-2022) qui comprend 22 mesures. Le troisième pilier repose sur la stratégie nationale de prévention et de protection de l'enfance (2020-2022) pour les enfants faisant l'objet d'une mesure de protection afin de renforcer la prévention des violences, normaliser les parcours des enfants protégés, accorder une importance accrue à la parole de ces enfants et favoriser leur intégration à la société.

Le Pacte pour l'enfance est complété par d'autres stratégies transversales : la stratégie nationale de prévention et de lutte contre la pauvreté (2018-2022) ; la stratégie nationale de soutien à la parentalité (2020-2022) ; la stratégie nationale de santé (2018-2022) se déclinant en stratégies thématiques (santé sexuelle, santé mentale) ; la stratégie Sport-santé (2019-2024) ; la stratégie nationale pour l'autisme (2018-2022) ; la stratégie en faveur de l'école inclusive (2019-2022). Le premier plan national d'action visant à éradiquer les mutilations sexuelles féminines (MSF) de juin

2019 et le **second plan national de lutte contre la traite des êtres humains** (TEH) (2019-2021) comportent également des mesures relatives aux enfants.

8 milliards d'euros sont investis annuellement pour la protection de l'enfance. Ces crédits ont augmenté au cours des dernières années pour répondre aux besoins des enfants les plus vulnérables. La stratégie nationale de prévention et de protection de l'enfance (2020-2022) prévoit 80 millions d'euros supplémentaires pour les départements français. Des moyens supplémentaires ont été alloués aux bilans de santé devenus obligatoires pour les enfants faisant l'objet d'une mesure de protection, dans le cadre du budget de la Sécurité sociale de 2020. Près de 10 millions d'euros ont été investis pour faciliter leur accès aux soins. Dans la loi de finances pour 2021, 120 millions d'euros sont dédiés à cette stratégie, en hausse par rapport à 2020. En outre, 5 millions d'euros sont consacrés aux mesures du plan de lutte contre les violences faites aux enfants et du plan « 1000 premiers jours ».

L'Etat s'est également doté de moyens supplémentaires, à travers la loi de finance 2020, dans le domaine de la justice, afin de former 70 nouveaux juges et 100 greffiers dédiés à la mise en œuvre de la réforme de la justice des mineurs. . Le recrutement de 252 emplois nouveaux est prévu entre 2018 et 2022 pour la protection judiciaire de la jeunesse et, en complément, 86 éducateurs ont été recrutés dans le cadre du budget alloué à la justice de proximité. La France a également renforcé les moyens pour la prise en charge des mineurs non accompagnés (MNA).

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

Strengthen, education on citizenship, equality and participation in democratic processes in school curricula at local, regional, national and EU level

Pre-primary education is based on the National Curriculum of Kindergarten Education in Hungary. This document establishes development areas, which include: health, (social and personal) well-being and emotional, moral, and value-oriented community education.

In primary and secondary education, a three-level structure constitutes the overall framework for curricular matters:

- The National Core Curriculum (NCC) is issued as a government decree. It provides the basic principles, specifies the obligatory and common objectives of the educational/teaching work performed in the general (non-vocational) phase of education. It is the most important document regulating the content of the public education system. It contains the development fields, educational goals, the tasks and values of the national education system, and the content of subject areas.
- It is the Framework Curricula, which elaborates on the implementation of the NCC. Several framework curricula are provided centrally for the different educational contexts. They serve as a basis for developing the Local Curriculum.
- At an institutional level, local curricula are developed by schools by the stipulations of NCC and the relevant Framework Curricula. The local curriculum takes into account the local circumstances and conditions.

The NCC has gone through a thorough revision, being introduced in a yearly schedule starting in September 2020 in grades 1, 5, and 9. It prescribes full respect for human rights throughout the whole education cycle including the respect for equality, democracy and religious diversity as well as the knowledge of basic concepts concerning gender equality and anti-discrimination. Overcoming personal prejudice is a key element of developing a good mindset.

Among the twelve most important development fields and educational goals defined in the modified NCC you can find „Education for citizenship and democracy”. Consequently, these educational goals must be represented to a certain extent in each school subject.

School subjects like History and Civic Studies are special in respect of GCED as they provide the best channels for creating democratic commitment in a targeted way.

Basic principles and goals of teaching History include making children familiar with the operations of a democratic state organization, the principles of the rule of law, human rights, and raising awareness of citizens' rights and responsibilities.

According to the revised NCC, „Civic studies” is a separate and compulsory school subject in grades 8 and 12 as opposed to the previous version of the curriculum when civic studies used to be integrated into History. This modification represents the importance of the topics incorporated into Civic studies, such as equal opportunities and social justice, the essence of the prohibition of discrimination, and the negative impact and social risks of discrimination, stereotypes, and prejudice.

Support schools in their efforts to engage pupils in the school's daily life and decision-making

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was ratified by Hungary in the autumn of 1991 and promulgated in the Act LXIV of 1991. The Hungarian State undertook to mobilise all available means, procedures, institutions, and resources to enforce the rights enshrined in the CRC.

Article 12 of the Convention states that "the child shall be guaranteed the right to express his or her views freely on all matters affecting him or her, and due regard shall be given to the views of the child, having regard to his or her age and degree of maturity".

It follows from the Convention that a child who has the capacity to judge must be heard in official and judicial proceedings directly concerning him or her. In addition to individual matters, it is also crucial that children have the opportunity to have a say in community decisions affecting a larger group of children.

In Hungary, children participate in education from the age of 6 until they are at least 16, however, the majority complete their secondary education (at 18-19 years of age).

Pupils' right to express their views is implemented at all levels in Hungary, from primary school to higher education, both at national and class level.

When considering issues at the national level, it is necessary to mention legislation that directly or indirectly affects the lives of children and young people. Of course, everyone, including students, has the right to express their individual opinions on the legislation that is being drafted. However, for meaningful participation and for children's views to be taken into account in a meaningful way, there must also be legislative framework. The Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education provides for the biennial convening of a student parliament due to the proposal of the student body. Voting members of the student parliament are elected in ascending order, at institutional and then county student parliament events.

In Hungary, students can express their opinions on all matters affecting students through the Student Councils (DÖK) in schools, and the DÖK must be consulted before decisions affecting the school and the children's lives are taken.

In addition to discussing issues, the county student parliaments, meeting every year, elect student representatives who forward and represent the issues and proposals of the students in their county at the national student parliament event. The county student parliament elects and sends a delegate from each county to the national student parliament proportionately to the number of students in the county.

The National Student Parliament, a national information forum for students on public education, reviews the rights of students and may adopt recommendations. The Student Parliament aims to make recommendations to decision-makers in education on how to enforce students' rights and make them more effective.

The National Student Council was elected for the first time at the 2017 National Student Parliament. The Council operates between the two National Student Parliament sessions. It monitors the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the National Student Parliament, gives its opinion on draft legislation affecting students, and makes recommendations to the education authorities.

The Student Parliament model provides children with a real, meaningful opportunity to participate in democratic decision-making and to represent their views and interests, in line with the aim of the CRC.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

Some of the main actions to implement the European Child Guarantee

Act CCXL of 2013 on the execution of punishments, criminal measures, certain coercive measures and confinement for administrative offences (hereinafter: Prison Code) contains the rules necessary for the execution of child guarantee. For detainees, there is the possibility to use the Family Decision-making Group-conference (hereinafter: FDG), in which the juvenile has full rights to participate. The FDG, held in a prison institute, provides an opportunity for participants to discuss and agree on the most important issues for successful social reintegration. They draw up and collectively execute a plan for successful social reintegration. The FDG is led by a facilitator, who must have appropriate training and skills in this area.

Developments of the nursery care system

The presence of better quality childcare services, such as nursery care, has a positive impact on family planning. This is also of great significance in terms of Hungary's demographic situation as reconciling work and private life is a top government priority. In order to stimulate demographic processes, in addition to achieving a higher birth rate, attention must also be paid to improving quality of life, i.e. ensuring that any disadvantages are not passed down through generations: day-care facilities also have a role to play in helping disadvantaged children to catch up. In the case of children in need and disadvantaged communities, the role of nursery plays a crucial role in the socialisation of children. The

participation of young children in high quality early childhood education and care contributes to improving outcomes for disadvantaged children as well as reducing child poverty and exclusion.

The government measures already taken to improve the system of childcare are in line with the objectives of the Recommendation on the Child Guarantee. Thus, **in many areas of the existing legislation are well aligned with the Recommendation** and do not require further changes. The modified responsibilities of local authorities; the adaptation of the types of nursery care concerning the needs of families and settlements (nursery, mini nursery, family nursery, work nursery); the introduction of on-call nursery services; free meals in nurseries and mini nurseries for children in need/with disabilities/living in a large family; the existence of discretionary rules on the fees to be paid by families, in addition to the wide range of beneficiaries eligible for free nursery care; the preferential access to admission in justified cases; possibility for members of the child protection alert system to initiate admission to a nursery or mini nursery in the case of a vulnerable child at risk; the comprehensive development of nursery care settings across the country over the years; human resource development or incentives to support operation **all contribute to achieving wider accessibility.** In addition to the existing discretionary fee arrangements, families can benefit from additional financial support through the EU as well as the centrally funded programme that aims to support those raising small children to enter the labour market. The programme can reduce the cost of placing children in non-municipal nursery care, if the conditions set out in the application are met.

The **continuous expansion of the number of places** for nursery care has resulted in a 70% increase since 2010. Nursery care is available in almost three times as many settlements contributing to the reduction of territorial disparities in the country. Since March 2021, capacity expansion and development is financed by the EU (RRF, TOP Plus) as well as domestic sources with an expenditure of nearly HUF 90 billion in 2021-22.

As another top government priority is to increase the population of small settlements; thus, encouraging young people to stay in their local area. In order to reach this goal, the government aims to ensure an adequate level of quality of nursery care for young children under 3 years of age - in parallel with the expansion of places on demand - in these settlements. This objective is to be achieved through the Hungarian Village Program through an application in 2022. The renovation and modernisation of municipal day-care settings in line with the needs of the 21st century, will serve this purpose; thus, creating an environment conducive to higher-quality childcare.

Within the framework of the complex development of day care (TOP Plus, RRF, EFOP Plus, DIMOP Plus, national budget resources) capacity expansion, modernisation/renewal of tools as well as the future digitalisation of the nursery care documentation system are of note. Additionally, the development of an incentive scheme for professionals working in nursery care settings is also planned.

In addition to development funds, the government will also provide the **necessary funding for the operation of institutions and services.** While in 2010 the central budget allocated HUF 11 billion for the operation of institutions and services providing care for children under 3 years of age, in 2022 it will be around six times as much. In addition to the continuous increase in terms of the specific amount of the normative state subsidy for family nurseries, the specific amount of the subsidy for workplace nurseries has also been increased in several steps from 2017 to 2022 (the latter more than eight times in comparison to 2017; moreover, the wage compensation subsidy will be added). The government has also introduced more flexible conditions for the state funding of nurseries and mini nurseries from 2021 onwards in order to ensure viable operation in response to the operational difficulties brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. These measures, which are the cornerstones of the infrastructure that makes up the running of the scheme, show that public spending on nursery care has been steadily increasing for years, **easing the financial burden on disadvantaged municipalities.**

Support for professionals in nursery care has been ongoing for years, in terms of both financial appreciation (their inclusion in the teachers' career development system, the introduction of new types of allowances, multi-stage pay increases, most recently in 2021 and 2022 as before) as well as further training.

Since 2010, the government has made a number of positive policy decisions in order to improve the nursery care system. These decisions are being taken forward and further considered in line with strategic objectives. In addition to the knowledge and planning of local specificities (needs assessment), the professional guidance of the two professional methodological organisations (Hungarian Association of Family Nurseries and Hungarian Association of Nurseries) is also helpful. Further professional consultations along the capacity development process can also draw on the involvement of the larger churches in Hungary, which already provide a great deal of support for public services specifically for children in need. In addition, greater uptake of nursery care services could also promote greater inclusion of children in need.

Nursery education in Hungary has been at the service of integration for several decades; thus, nursery care can also be provided to children with special educational needs as well as children eligible for early development and care. Over the last few years, **the number of children with special educational needs has been steadily increasing in nursery care**, thanks to the integration-oriented approach and measures of the government.

To ensure that children with signs of developmental delay receive appropriate screening at an earlier age, there is a need to create pathways in a way that promotes better accessibility: this is the aim of the EU flagship project currently underway and planned for this funding cycle (**cross-sectoral development of early childhood intervention**).

Under the revision of the Barcelona targets, the following should be emphasized: unique in Europe, mothers can stay home with their child until the age of 3 on state benefits (family support benefits) in Hungary, which means that it is up to the parents to decide when to return to the labour market. Thus, Hungarian families are not obligated to make use of nursery care. Nevertheless, the government has recognised that complex nursery care development directly contributes to family-work life balance. Capacity expansion and development will continue to be pursued to develop a responsive nursery care system that promotes territorial coverage.

As the Hungarian regulatory environment is not comparable to the nursery systems of other Member States in many areas other than this general principle, we still do not agree with the specific quantified Barcelona targets, i.e. the centrally set EU-level target for the provision of nursery care, which we expressed during the EU consultations launched in this context in 2021-2022. We note that, if the number of places available is taken as a benchmark, the rate rose from 17.7% in 2019 to 18.7% in 2020, i.e. a steady increase. Since 2010, the expansion of the institutional system has improved on the previous rates and, based on data from March 2022, there are now enough places for 20% of children aged 0-2 in Hungary. Never before in Hungary has such a high proportion of children of nursery age had access to nursery care as is already the case (in 2010, around 11.1% of 0-2 year olds had access to nursery care). For a more in-depth analysis of the data, it is significant to note that 98% of children in Hungary who are in nursery care are over 1 years of age, so by 2022, the proportion of children in this age group has risen to 30% (this proportion has also been steadily increasing for years, 26.2% in 2019, 27.5% in 2020).

Introduction of social support activities in kindergartens and schools

The overall objective of introducing social assistance in kindergartens and schools is to improve the social well-being and quality of life of children and young people in kindergartens and schools (including the socially disadvantaged) by strengthening primary prevention, creating the conditions for the provision of social assistance in kindergartens and schools, defining the professional content, human and financial resources necessary for the maintenance and systematic dissemination of the service.

Following the success of the pilot project, social assistance in kindergartens and schools was introduced nationwide on 1 September 2018, and the provision of social assistance in kindergartens and schools became a mandatory task for all district headquarters. For every 1,000 children registered in a public education establishment, 1 person is required to be employed as a nursery and school social assistant. Nursery and school social assistants work in nursery schools, schools and dormitories.

The Government provides HUF 5.6 billion annually from the central budget for this purpose

Work towards achieving the targets proposed within the European Education Area

In order to **contribute to the objectives of the European Education Area**, Hungary participates in the Early Childhood Education and Care Working Group, which focuses on the implementation of a quality framework for early childhood education and care, and learning based on quality assessment, monitoring as well as evaluation. Hungary has made substantial progress towards meeting these goals: a new protocol (Standard for Child Day Care), newly developed and published in February 2022, will help to monitor the professional content of nursery care, and will also allow for self-monitoring by professionals working in all types of nursery care.

In light of the humanitarian disaster in the neighboring country (Ukraine), certain rules apply in terms of employment/social security of individuals with temporary protection and on the implementation of Act LXXX of 2007 on the right of asylum, according to Government Decree No. 106/2022 (12.3.2022); among others, if individuals with temporary protection take care of a minor, they are entitled to make use of nursery care for the purpose of the care of their young child during the day under the same conditions as a Hungarian citizen would. Refugees have been eligible for nursery care in the same way for several decades.

Facilitating integration and inclusion in the area of education and labour market

The National Crime Prevention Council of Hungary supports several initiatives in order to facilitate integration and inclusion in the area of education and labour market:

1. ART-RAVALÓ is a socio-art project for young adults who are disadvantaged or raised in child protection. Young people involved in the project receive nine months of art and career training in adult education. The goal of the project is to develop the personalities of young people through artistic activity and in the long run, to promote a positive vision of the future, social inclusion and successful employment.

2. JUVENTAS III. – Drama pedagogy and theatre in crime prevention. The third part of this project aims to support solidarity and empathy among different communities of our society by strengthening social inclusion and tolerance, fighting against discrimination and prejudices, and facilitating partnerships through art.

3. CRIME PREVENTION TRAINING. The Secretariat of the National Crime Prevention Council offers several training for free. Our work focuses on organising and delivering accredited and certified training courses for teachers, police officers and youth protection professionals. Training courses for school mediators have also been launched.

The most popular training are ‘crime prevention at school’, ‘gen Z’, and ‘adventure/experimental pedagogy’. In these teacher courses pedagogues hear about the newest trends and learn tools, games and methods they can use in the classroom. In our training we teach good pedagogical methods and awareness-raising tools that will help participants to work effectively to prevent becoming a victim or perpetrator.

4. THE SOLIDARITY PROJECT OF MOHOLY-NAGY UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN. One of the important tasks of crime prevention is to develop attitudes of responsibility towards each other and community life, which is perhaps best expressed by the word "solidarity". This is why we chose "solidarity" as the theme for a project aimed at giving the term a specific form. We hope that through the different visions, the message will find young artists who are able to capture and process what solidarity means to them in their own way. Their short films are available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZ7ANFhCF4V2SJoTvMZMow7hByh7aNv7X>

Measures to support adoptive families from 2020:

- The **Adoption Fee** (ÖFD) has been introduced to help parents of children over the age of two, as it allows adoptive parents to stay home with their child for almost half a year after the child has been placed in an adoptive family. It supports the integration of the child into the family.

- The ÖFD is valid after the domestic adoption of all children over the age of 2 and under the age of 18, provided that the adoptive parent has adequate insurance periods. Parents who adopt an infant child remain eligible for the infant care allowance. Thereafter, a childcare fee may be charged.

- Parents adopting a child older than 3 years of age have become entitled to the **adoptive GYES**, without the previous time limit set at the age of 10. Adoptive parents who have already used the ÖFD for this purpose will not receive the adoptive GYES.
- It is also possible to apply for **maternity allowance** in the case of adoption. An adoptive parent is also entitled to a single maternity allowance from 2020 if the adoption was granted after the child was 6 months old.
- Completion of the **adoption course** has become available to those intending to adopt on a voluntary basis and, in order to encourage participation, has been free of charge since September 2020, with an unchanged duration and professional content.
- With effect from 1 September 2020, the Act LXV of 2020 on the Amendment of Certain Acts Relating to the Facilitation of Adoption amended certain provisions of the Labor Code in order to make the preparation for adoption more efficient and to increase legal certainty for those involved in adoption. As a new element, it introduced the absence required to prepare for adoption in cases of exemption from the employee's obligation to be available and working. This new case of exemption from work is also a period of paid leave. On this basis, during the period of preparation for adoption, the worker is exempted from the obligation to be available and to work for a maximum of ten working days a year, on the basis of a certificate issued by the adoption organization.

Identify children as a priority target group in the national health strategies

The government approved by its Government Resolution No. 1722/2018 (XII.18.) 5 national health care programmes (2019-2030) focusing on the development of the health care system. These include the National Child Health Care Programme and the National Programme of Mental Health (besides the National Programme of Cardiovascular Diseases, the National Musculoskeletal Programme and the National Cancer Control Programme). The national programmes are not public yet. The reason is that they provide a basis for a decision on the Healthy Hungary 2021-2027 Health Care Sector Strategy. The Strategy is the national development plan for the 2021-2027 European Union programming period.

Build up networks with families, schools, youth, and other stakeholders and institutions involved in mental health of children

Comprehensive health promotion and school programmes to promote mental health and reduce addictions

The Ministry of Human Capacities has been implementing a complex programme between 2020-2021 in cooperation with the Hungarian Student Sports Association, whose implementation was extended in 2022. The programme aims to prevent addictions, improve children's mental health and support teachers in this process, within the framework of comprehensive school health promotion.

Public education institutions are the primary setting for the following 4 sub-programmes:

- 1.) 30-hour accredited teacher training course entitled "Mental Health Basic Training for Teachers", which aims to provide teachers with a mental health approach and to develop the personal and professional skills and abilities necessary for problem solving.
- 2.) The creation of a knowledge base and a network for teachers to provide mental health support in dealing with difficult pedagogical and behavioural situations.
- 3.) Implementing health promotion and prevention programmes in cooperation with NGOs offering professional programmes.
- 4.) Organising movement-based student sports festivals and events, which are not only held at schools but also at venues outside school.

During 2021-2022, a pilot element was added to the programme to reduce addiction among potentially at-risk secondary school students by offering alternative physical activity programmes. The programme involves schools (vocational schools, technical schools) run by the National Agency for Vocational and Adult Education. Sustainability is an important aspect of the design of the pilot programme, therefore, it

provides for the purchase of sports equipment that will support the physical activity of students even after the pilot period.

The pilot element proved to be successful in the first phase of implementation and was therefore extended to some child protection institutions, where a variety of programmes are organized according to the needs of the institution (music, dance, sports festivals, fitness training, ball games).

Given the importance of the professional content of the overall programme and its success, the Ministry of Human Capacities provides additional funding for its continuation in 2022.

Establishing addiction rehabilitation centres for children and young people

In accordance with the law, adult drug treatment/rehabilitation facilities can only provide services for young people with addiction problems from the age of 16, but the emergence of designer drugs has clearly highlighted the need to address this new need for care as soon as possible.

After several years of preparation, the establishment of three child and youth addiction rehabilitation services for 10-16 year olds with drug problems has been a much needed development in recent years.

The three facilities were funded for the first three years as model programmes through individual grants from the state budget. Later on, the financing of the health service and the normative-based public subsidy for the social service were also established.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of rehabilitation activities, great efforts have also been made to set up a system of pre- and after-care associated with the service.

In 2021, an additional foundation-based child and youth rehabilitation institution was established. The institution provides services for girls and boys aged 12-18 in its residential addiction and psychiatric rehabilitation programme.

Improving the infrastructural conditions of child and adolescent psychiatry, addiction and mental health care

The project EFOP-2.2.0-16-2016-00002 "Improving the infrastructural conditions of child and adolescent psychiatry, addiction and mental health care" has been implemented since 2016 with the following contents and objectives. The main objective of the priority project is to improve the mental health of the population under 18 years of age, to develop the youth psychiatric, addiction and mental health care system and to create the conditions for its modern, cost-effective operation.

The scheme will include the creation and modernisation of active inpatient child psychiatric wards and child psychiatric units. It will include the creation of "high security" child psychiatric beds to cater for juvenile patients who are potentially aggressive or have special needs, and improvements in outpatient care and nursing.

Main actions to implement the European Child Guarantee

"Útravaló" scholarship Programme (On the road)

The legal basis for the scholarship programme is provided by the Government Decree No. 152/2005 (VIII.2.) on the Útravaló Scholarship Programme. The aim of the scholarship programme is to provide personal mentoring and scholarships to disadvantaged and disadvantaged Roma/Gypsy students, to prevent drop-outs and to enhance their chances for further education. Eligibility for the scholarship programme is determined primarily by the student's social need and eligibility, but the amount of the scholarship is determined by the student's academic record and performance at the end of the previous year. In recent academic years, an average of nearly 10-11,000 students have benefitted from the scholarship. Through the scholarship, students aged 12-24 at primary, secondary and university level are supported.

"Tanoda" Programme

The Tanoda is a community space with an independent infrastructure, run by a non-governmental organisation, based on local characteristics, voluntary participation of children and young people and their individual needs.

It provides a complex service for the holistic development of the personality, which is not accessible to children and young people (aged 6-18) who are not adequately recognised in the education system and who are marginalised in society. It creates an understanding and inclusive community that has a positive impact on pupils, which in turn has a positive long-term effect on their behaviour at school.

EU funding has supported the operation of Tanoda in Hungary since 2004. Following several cycles of EU-funded projects, the system of the Tanoda service has been developed and as of 2018, the Act on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration and related implementing regulations govern the operation of the service. There are currently more than 180 Tanoda, with 5 500 disadvantaged children attending regularly.

Sure Start Children's Houses

The Sure Start Children's House is a service that contributes to the development of young children (0-3) living in extreme poverty, including children of Roma origin, with severe socialisation deficits, by involving parents. In the Sure Start Children's House, the child is always with his or her parent, where the best possible environment is created for movement, speech and intellectual development, and the parent learns the skills needed to raise a healthy personality. Parents can learn how to support their child's healthy development and help to strengthen their child's independent living skills. In 2017, 110 Children's Houses were already operating in the country, followed by nearly 80 new Sure Start Children's Houses under the Széchenyi 2020 programme, which are regularly visited by around 2,500 young children and their parents every year. The government provides budget support for long-term operation, so a tender published in early 2022 will also help the EU-funded Children's Houses to be transferred to the domestic funding system.

BARI SHEJ - FÁTĀ MÁRÉ

The programme is aimed at mentoring Roma girls aged 10 to 18 with a disadvantaged background in primary or secondary school. The aim is to encourage more Roma girls to continue their education after completing eight years of primary school. It also aims to increase the motivation of girls at risk of dropping out of school and to encourage their families to support their studies. The programme has been operating in Hungary since autumn of 2015 under the nationally funded PILOT programme and from 2017 it has been implemented with EU funding of HUF 2.66 billion (EFOP) over 24 months.

The programme has been implemented by 89 beneficiary organisations (churches, NGOs) and has benefited 1 780 young girls with fewer opportunities. We plan to continue the programme with EU funding

Micro-regional Childcare Programme

The Integrated Regional Children's Programmes project is being implemented in 31 districts over a period of almost 5 years, with EU funding of HUF 15 billion from the ESF and HUF 3 billion from the ERDF for the 2014-2020 period. The main aim of the programmes, which employ an average of 35 professionals per district - 1 100 in total - is to reach disadvantaged children and young people aged 0-24 with development services to improve their chances, slow down the regression into poverty and support professionals working with children. The nearly 80,000 people involved in the programmes have not only participated in development and prevention programmes, but also in camps and experiential education. These activities, in addition to directly developing children's skills and abilities, contribute to the development of community-type experiences and the need for meaningful leisure activities.

The administrative and professional support for the operation of the Child Help Programme is provided by the Child Help Offices, which are compulsory in all district programmes.

Education of sustainable development (ESD)

Hungary participates in international networks and applies the elements of the international competence frameworks for the ESD in the eco-school network, for instance. Climate change education was previously included in Hungary's 2012 National Core Curriculum. Now, these aspects are reinforced in

the new National Core Curriculum. For decades, climate change has been an intrinsic element of the knowledge transmitted by Hungary's domestic education system. The current National Core Curriculum gives priority to the issues of sustainability and environmental awareness. In this sense, the growing generations need to learn that resources must be used consciously, cautiously, and responsibly. Public education institutions should, in accordance with the requirements of the National Core Curriculum, introduce students to the socio-economic processes that can cause various crises in their narrower and wider environment. Climate change is currently taught within the framework of Geography, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry classes as well as in Foreign Languages and Civic Education.

Outside the regular school disciplines, there are also climate awareness issues. The Eco-School Program, run by the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary, incorporates environmental protection and sustainability initiatives into the daily lives of about 1050 public education institutions. Numerous eco-schools operate a so-called Energy Commando: in these institutions, the energy-efficient operation of the school building is realized with the active involvement of students. Despite the challenges caused by the pandemic, the national excellence networks of whole-institutional ESD – the eco-schools and the green kindergartens – have continued prospering in Hungary. The Hungarian Eco-school Network was awarded the Certificate of National Recognition for Quality in Global Education by Global Education Network Europe in 2021. Hungary took an active role in formulating the proposal for a Council Recommendation on education for environmental sustainability, and the eco-school indicators served as an exemplar case for the work of the expert group.

The Sustainability Thematic Week has been coordinated by the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary since 2016, with more and more schools joining every year. The main purpose of the program is to raise students' awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. One of them is the fight against climate change. In 2020/2021, more than 370,000 students from 1630 schools participated in the thematic week, while 1080 teachers joined the online trainings. There is an online, voluntary, self-assessment survey linked to the program available for the second year now, which has collected data about students' knowledge and attitudes towards sustainability from over 25,000 responders (2.5% of the overall student population in public education in the country) so far – results from the analysis show that participants in the Thematic Week show stronger awareness in sustainability topics and action areas.

Educator ESD competences

Hungary is currently implementing a forward-looking exercise that is a unique, exemplary initiative in Europe. This was only the first step towards integrating teachers' education for sustainable development (or ESD) competencies in teachers' pre-and in-service training as well.

In 2018, ESD competences are included in the competence portfolio of teachers in Hungary. This means that for teachers' qualification and advancement processes, their ESD competences need to be proven with evidence from their daily work.

A mixed group of experts (teacher training, education researcher, certification expert, head of the institution, and practicing teacher members) was involved in the elaboration of this element of the competence framework. Through the work of this expert group, ESD competencies have been integrated into the evaluation process of educators, and the necessary tools, guides, and recommendations have been developed. By doing so, teachers became more motivated to learn more about ESD. In the autumn of 2019, the attention of about 7000 school principals was raised to the relevance of sustainability as part of the official school term opening events, while 12120 teachers (representing about 12% of Hungarian teachers) took part in professional learning programs of workshops, on-site visits, and presentations. Also in autumn 2019, 1706 mentor teachers received ESD-oriented trainings. From 2020, a set of 4 online mini-courses developed by the Educational Authority of Hungary also supported teachers' learning in ESD.

The next steps allowed embedding ESD in pre-service teacher training. In 2020, with the involvement of universities at stake, a systemic revision of pre-service teacher training curricula and output criteria started. As a result, ESD competences became part of the training program as well as exit requirements; it

was a delightful experience to see the shared inclination from stakeholders involved in the process regarding this topic.

Developing teachers' ESD competences in Hungary received the Certificate of Exemplifying Quality in Global Education from Global Education Network Europe in 2021.

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

Raise awareness of, and invest in capacity building and measures for (i) a more effective prevention of violence

The National Media and Infocommunications Authority's role in rendering electronically published Information Inaccessible:

According to the Act C of 2003 on Electronic Communications, The Media- and Infocommunications Authority (referred as NMHH) shall organize and monitor the execution of rendering electronic information inaccessible temporarily or permanently, on the basis of a court order adopted in criminal proceedings under Code of Criminal Procedure, or as ordered by other legislation, and also the rendering of electronic information inaccessible as ordered by an authority referred to in specific other legislation.

The NMHH also operate the central database of court orders on disabling access to electronic information, and shall cooperate in providing the technical environment necessary for rendering such information inaccessible. The electronic communications service provider shall execute the court order adopted in criminal proceedings, or as ordered by an authority referred to in specific other legislation, immediately upon receipt thereof, at the latest within one working day, on rendering information published by way of an electronic communications network inaccessible temporarily or permanently, by means of disabling access to such information.

The Internet Hotline (hereinafter referred to as "IH") is an online information and assistance service operated by NMHH, in the interest of promoting safe use of the internet, in pursuing an objective in the public interest, such as the protection of minors, raising awareness, help to mitigate online content depicting violence, hate and other forms of potential abuses. IH helps to quickly remove illegal content found on the internet based on reports. IH also makes efforts to ensure that children are exposed to as little content considered harmful (to them) as possible on the internet. Therefore, IH cooperates with the National Bureau of Investigation and its main international partner, INHOPE (International Association of Internet Hotlines). Anyone (including children) can contact IH to report online content that may be illegal or harmful to minors.

IH also plays an educational role: the analysts of IH monitor and analyse internet phenomena jeopardizing the safe use of the internet of minors, and disseminate information in that context.

The IH regularly runs campaigns to raise awareness among children. Most recently IH launched a campaign on the occasion of Safer Internet Day focusing primarily on the issue of intimate images taken by children of themselves. The message of the campaign reinforces to youngsters that they have the right to say no, they are not obliged to send any videos, images to anyone even under emotional manipulation. The campaign uses the term "red flag" as a indication of violent and manipulative behaviour, and something important for children to recognize so that they can pluck up the courage to say no in order not to become victims in such situations.

In addition, hotline analysts regularly give presentations on internet safety for children.

More information on the IH is available at <https://nmhh.hu/internethotline/>

Child helpline (116 111) and missing children hotline (116 000)

In line with 2007/116/EC: Commission Decision of 15 February 2007 on reserving the national numbering range beginning with 116 for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value, the numbering range beginning with '116' is allocated in the national numbering plan for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value. Child helpline (116 111) and missing children hotline (116 000) are assigned and actively used. Further information can be found in Hungarian on the NMHH's website:

https://nmhh.hu/cikk/115/A_116_kezdoszamu_harmonizalt_kozerdeku_szolgaltatasok_szamainak_hasznalata_es_kijelolese

Improve the functioning of child protection systems at national level

The government's priority social policy objective is to create opportunities and ensure children's right to the protection guaranteed by the Fundamental Law and other legislation. In line with this, the main aim of sectoral governance is to provide more joined-up, effective and targeted support to children, individuals, families and the professionals who help them.

In this spirit, a number of developments have been made in recent years in the field of social services, taking into account social and professional needs and focusing on prevention. Among these, we should highlight the family and child welfare services, where several forward-looking and innovative solutions have been developed. Some examples are:

- the integration of family assistance and child welfare services;
- the extension of the child protection detection and signalling system to two and then four levels, in order to detect problems of children, individuals and families in time, take the necessary measures and organise the services and care best suited to the needs of the person in need;
- the publication of guidelines, professional recommendations and protocols to ensure uniform and predictable practice in family and child welfare services;
- the organisation of an expert network run by the Ministry of Human Capacities and the Hungarian National Association of Family Support and Child Welfare Services;
- the development of the system of care for children in temporary care, with particular attention to the expansion of external accommodation to promote independent living for families;

Child protection number: 06 (80) 212-021.

It is free 24 hours a day. The aim of the service is to ensure and facilitate a professional, efficient and timely response to any call indicating that a child is at risk, regardless of the person making the report and their obligation to report it.

Methodologies against child abuse

With effect from 15 March 2014, in order to encourage reporting, the Child Protection Act has introduced closed data management, according to which the child welfare service and the guardianship authority must treat the data of an institution or person giving an alert due to the abuse or neglect of a child in a closed manner without a separate request. In order to ensure the more efficient operation of the signalling system and the protection of the signalling person, the service provider providing family, and child welfare services and the guardianship office must handle the data of the institution or person signalling due to child abuse or neglect without a separate request. The purpose of the amendment is to help to prevent and detect cases of child abuse as soon as possible, and to take immediate action to protect children.

It has also extended the rights of the child to include the right of professionals working to protect children, in particular to recognize and end child abuse, to apply uniform principles and methodologies. The "Sector-Neutral Uniform Principles and Methodology for the Recognition and Elimination of Child Abuse" (hereinafter: the Methodological Guide) approved by the Minister of Human Capacities was prepared by the Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Child Protection with the assistance of the Ministry's departments.

According to the regulations of the Child Protection Act, which entered into force on 1 January 2018, the investigation and management of child abuse cases in institutions providing child protection care and reformatories must be carried out in accordance with the institutional, maintenance and sectoral methodology approved by the Minister and published on the Ministry's website.

In order to comply with the legal requirement, the professional regulatory material entitled "Institutional, maintainer and sectoral methodology for the investigation and treatment of cases of abuse of children and young adults in institutions providing child protection care, foster care networks and reformatories" (hereinafter: Methodology) has been prepared.

From 1 July 2018, the provisions of the Methodology shall be mandatory for all child protection specialist care institutions in the country (foster care networks, children's and residential homes, regional child protection services) and reformatories. Sector management continuously monitors the investigation and treatment of reported cases of child abuse.

Regulation of suitability for job and disqualification in order to prevent child abuse

According to the provisions of the Child Protection Act, a person with a criminal record, as well as a person with a criminal record who has established criminal liability in a final judgment or is subject to criminal proceedings in certain exhaustively defined crimes may not be employed in child welfare or child protection system. Nor shall it apply to a person who is subject to a disqualification (profession ban).

In this context, since 1 December 2017, the perpetrator of sexual offenses committed against a person under the age of eighteen and an offense against sexual morality shall be definitively banned from engaging in any occupation or other activity involving the upbringing, supervision, care, or has any other power or influence in relation to such a person. In the case of endangering a minor, the mandatory application of a ban on occupation may be waived in cases of special merit, at the discretion of the court.

Since 1 January 2018, the Child Protection Act stipulates that in the child welfare and child protection institutional system, the person exercising the right of appointment requests the professional opinion of the previous employer and the persons and bodies performing legal protection duties at the previous employer on the person affected by the assignment and termination of employment. In the case of re-appointment, the person exercising the employer's rights is informed about the professional opinion of the child rights representative, the child protection guardians, the opinion of the interest representation forum, the board of educators, and the results of government office, ombudsman and prosecutorial inquiries concerning the institution.

Similarly, a person applying to be a foster parent is obliged to declare whether he or she has previously had a foster parent employment relationship with another operator as part of the examination of the foster parent's suitability. On the basis of this declaration, the operator requests a professional opinion from the previous operator of the foster parent regarding the performance of the foster parent's professional duties and the termination of his / her legal relationship in order to determine the suitability of the foster parent.

The purpose of these amendments was to make the historical information and circumstances related to the previous legal relationship, its termination and cancellation known to the potential new employer, thus reducing the risks (dangers) related to the information to be withheld in order to increase the protection of children.

Development of Barnahus Hearing and Therapy Service

From 1 January 2019, the tasks of the regional child protection services include the service based on the Barnahus model, which examines neglected and abused children, especially those who have been sexually abused, and facilitates the hearing of the affected children at the request of an official body.

The new service aims to protect child victims of sexual abuse from the retraumatizing effects of multiple interrogations during evidence and criminal proceedings, as well as from other severely traumatic factors in the proceedings.

Pursuant to Section 87 (1) (b) (bb) of Act 90 of 2017 on criminal procedure, as of January 1, 2021, a procedural act requiring the participation of a person under the age of eighteen shall be instituted by the court, the prosecutor's office and the investigating authority may also be performed with the assistance of a consultant providing the service pursuant to Section 61 (2) of Act 31 of 1997 on the protection of children and guardianship administration. This makes it possible to use video and audio recordings made during the realization of Barnahus model service as evidence in criminal proceedings.

The execution of a procedural act as described above introduces a special enforcement regime, in which case the consultant is directly involved in the execution of the procedural act. In this special procedure, the consultant not only interprets the questions and communications of the acting body, but also uses his /

her professional knowledge and methods to get answers to the questions specified by the acting body. The special feature of the Barnahus method is the obligation to cooperate very closely with the authorities and to ensure that, in view of the child protection history, a person with genuine expertise is involved in the execution of the procedural act.

One of Barnahus' key criteria is that the child is questioned according to a specific protocol that ensures the quality and quantity of evidence obtained. The main purpose of the interrogation, in addition to avoiding re-traumatization, is to allow the child to report in as much detail as possible in a way that complies with the rules of evidence and the right to a defence.

The domestic application of the Barnahus model started in Vas county (Szombathely) in 2016. In addition, to ensure national coverage, the service was opened in Hajdú-Bihar County (Debrecen) on 10 June 2021, in addition to the capital, and two more hearing and therapeutic services are being prepared. Following the establishment of the National Child Protection Service on 1 July 2021, the professional methodological support and development of the services and the training of specialist became the task of the body called the Hearing and Therapy Service.

Foster care

Since 1 January 2014, all foster parents have a uniformized employment relationship

- the foster parent's fee became tied to the value of the minimum wage, depending on the number of children placed and their care needs, which meant an almost fourfold increase in the income of foster parents between 2013 and 2022,
- foster parents' full entitlement to health and pension insurance
- they can benefit from a family tax and contribution allowance for the children they care for

From 1 January 2014 as a general rule a child under the age of 12 must be placed with a foster parent and not in an institution, unless institutional care serves his or her interests due to his or her disability, illness or the need to accommodate a large number of siblings. As a result of the measure, the proportion of foster care for minor children increased from 64.6% to 70.2% between 2013 and 2020.

In order to promote the care of children in foster families, we have taken new measures:

- from 1 January 2020, foster parents can receive Child Care Fee for children under 2 years of age cared for in their own household (693 recipients in January 2022),
- from January 2020, a foster parent is entitled to a discounted ticket 16 times a year for a child placed in foster care on the basis of a "Dependent Travel Voucher" (until December 2021, 1,174 foster parents requested it),
- from 1 January 2021, the monthly amount of the extra fee to a foster parent for caring each child with particular, special or dual needs placed with him or her has increased from 5% of the minimum wage to 7% (a measure affecting about 3,200 foster parents for about 5,800 children).

Tackling trafficking in human beings

The stage play called „I stand for you”, financed by the Ministry of Interior, was presented in organization of the Hungarian National Police Headquarters that relates to tasks identified in the Government Decree issued to enhance the efficiency of tackling trafficking in human beings. The play in itself is a complex societal awareness-raising programme, the primary target group of which are children living in children's homes and professionals dealing with them. Its objectives are to raise awareness on risks of prostitution and sexual exploitation, to disseminate knowledge in order to avoid risks and to take the right decisions.

Provide adequate support to children with specific vulnerabilities who suffer violence, as well as to violence that occur in schools

In 2021 Hungary won the European Crime Prevention Award (organized by the European Crime Prevention Network) with the project 'Ask for help!'. (Promotion video of the project: https://youtu.be/v8bCC_ZuF8I)

The main objective of the Ask for help! project is to raise awareness of the seriousness and extent of bullying behaviour, as well as the harm it can cause to the victims, perpetrators and bystanders. This project therefore provides four pillars containing various art, pedagogical and educational tools (e.g. professional guided videos, music and drama pedagogy and a peer-to-peer education programme) that help to discuss bullying from all its perspectives and to address attitude formation. Minors often go through challenging social and emotional experiences which is why the project utilises the power of opinion forming to encourage minors to follow positive examples set by their peers. A second aspect of the Ask for help! project is discussion sessions in order to facilitate dialogue between youngsters, teachers and parents. These sessions allow for the development of a peer network that can discuss issues and explore effective anti-bullying responses. The project is ongoing since 2018.

The National Crime Prevention Council published several children's books containing crime prevention messages. 'Bob's Tales' and 'Tales of forest town' are stories about dangerous situations and safety solutions, but also about recognising and managing emotions. The aim is to improve emotional intelligence, educate children about risky situations and teach them how to make responsible decisions both in the virtual and in the real world.

Rubeus Association with the support of the National Crime Prevention Council runs a project that aims to enhance the acceptance and visibility of child care and child protection. The main target groups of the project were single parents, disabled parents, and parents suffering from addiction. The project offered tools for social workers of this field to successfully motivate families, help them in competence development and teach them alternative dispute resolutions.

Raise awareness of, and invest in capacity building and measures for (ii) protection of victims and witnesses, including with the necessary safeguards for child suspects or accused

Sections 132 and 394 paragraph (2) of the Prison Code serves in compliance with Article 24 of Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011; and with Section 69/A and 324 of Article 25 of the Directive on *combating sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography and replacing council framework decision 2004/68/IB*. Furthermore, the Prison Code is designed to comply with Directive (EU) 2016/800 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on *procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused of offences*.

Amendments concerning the criminal law

Since the adoption of the Strategy, the following amendments have been made in the field of criminal law:

I. Act LXXIX of 2021 was adopted, which introduced the following stricter regulation to Act C of 2012 on the Criminal Code in order to provide even more enhanced protection for children against violence:

1. In order to enhance the protection of children from sexual crimes, prevent further sexual offences against children and in order to be able to monitor persons in direct contact with children,

- under certain conditions (only regarding adult offenders when the committed criminal offence is of sexual nature and committed against a child, the offender was disqualified from a profession where he or she would be in contact with children),
- it became possible to request specific data (e.g. year of birth, the city of residence, front-view facial image, time of the commission of the criminal offence, the day the national or foreign court's decision became final and binding)
- by a limited circle of persons (adults who are a relative of or educates/supervises or cares for a child and it shall be verified that these conditions are met and the requester shall also indicate the family name and given name of the person to whom the data access request relates).

Also, the obtained data must be treated confidentially, no copies or screenshots can be taken, and the appropriate technical means and measures shall be taken by the competent authority to prevent any possibility to make textual copies of the data.

All necessary information of such data request and transfer shall also be registered.

2. The amendment enhanced the protection of victims of sexual crimes by extending the statute of limitation of sexual crimes, which are punishable by not more than 5 years of imprisonment, committed against children; thus the statute of limitation only starts when the victim reaches the age of 21 years (formerly this was 18 years). Other criminal offences, thus, which are punishable by more than 5 years of imprisonment, do not have a statute of limitation (this rule did not change);

3. The amendment also introduced, that offenders of sexual crimes against children, which are punishable by more than 8 years of imprisonment, shall be excluded from the possibility of release on parole. Since there are cases, which could fall under this rule, but are, in fact, not related to the most serious cases of paedophile crimes, it is possible to omit the application of this rule in cases of exceptional circumstances;

4. The rules of permanent disqualification from profession were amended in a way, that it is now *expressis verbis* applicable for offenders of child pornography. So far, it would have required an actual victim under the age of 18 years, but due to the amendments to the criminal offence of child pornography, now it can be applied to offenders of child pornography committed on realistic images;

5. Another measure to enhance the protection of victims, as well as the supervision and reintegration of and assistance to an offender is that the criminal measure of probationary supervision must be ordered regarding an offender of sexual crimes against children;

6. The sanctions of sexual violence against a child under the age of 12 and a child under the age of 18 were enhanced respectively when it is committed by abusing the power of influence or committed by several persons at the same time;

7. Regarding the criminal offence of child pornography, the amendment restructured the already existing offence, enhanced the available sanctions, included new aggravating circumstances, and redefined the term pornographic recording. The main changes can be summed up as follows:

- pornographic material shall now include a realistic representation of a person, which should be understood as an image almost identical to a real person
- making a pornographic material or show is now considered to be one of the most serious cases of child pornography besides placing on the market, trading in, or making accessible to a large audience
- new aggravating circumstances include:
 - committed against a child under the age of 12,
 - against a person raised by or under the supervision, care or medical treatment of the perpetrator, or by abusing any other power or influence over the aggrieved party, or by exploiting the vulnerable situation of the aggrieved party,
 - by a public officer using that capacity,
 - regarding a recording capturing tormenting or violence, or
 - by a special recidivist.
- it is punishable more severely to invite a child under the age of 18 years to participate in a pornographic recording or show, this is to give more protection against grooming.

8. Also, the criminal offence of harassment (section 222 of the Criminal Code) is amended by a new aggravating circumstance, thus, it is punishable more severely if an adult harasses and disturbs (for the purpose of causing fear or interfering with the private life or daily lifestyle) a person under the age of 18 years.

II. Act CXXXIV of 2021 amended Act XC of 2017 on criminal proceedings in order to further clarify and enhance the use of the Barnahus system during criminal proceedings. The amendments took effect on 1 March 2022. As part of this, the following main changes took place:

- A person with special expertise involved in the procedure in relation to the Barnahus system shall take part in the procedure as a special adviser. This means that the person involved in questioning the child does not act in his/her own right and in the interests of his/her own task, like judicial experts, but he/she acts rather for achieving the purposes of the proceeding authority. Accordingly, the amendment clarifies the relationship between the proceeding authority and the special adviser, including his/her activities in connection with conveying the questions to the child.
- For guaranteeing the special protection and support for child victims, a specialist using the so-called Barnahus method, or any other specialist having experience in child psychology (child protection) and using other professionally grounded methods can be appointed as a special adviser. The qualification criteria for special advisers are laid down in separate legal instruments (Decree 15/1998 (IV.30.) of the Minister of National Economy and Decree 12/2018 (VI.12.) of the Minister of Justice).
- The methodological requirement for the execution of the procedural act is that the child interviewed typically does not meet the members of the proceeding authorities in person. Any other person participating in the proceeding and members of the authority usually stay in another room. The child usually does not perceive the presence of such persons, and the connection between the two rooms is typically ensured by a telecommunication device. The special adviser follows the instructions of the authorities, and interprets the questions and comments and legally mandatory warnings of the court, the public prosecutor's office to the child. The detailed rules on the use of telecommunications equipment used in the procedural act are included in Decree 12/2018 (VI.12.) of the Minister of Justice.
- In the past, the use of a special adviser in criminal proceedings was only possible during the investigation. The amendment stipulates that the court is also entitled to use the assistance of a specialist adviser after the indictment has been filed, provided that the legal conditions are met. The detailed conditions for the use of the special adviser are also laid down in Decree 12/2018 (VI.12.) of the Minister of Justice.

Victim support system

The Hungarian state victim support system pays special attention to children as a special, particularly vulnerable group of victims. Victim support officers provide assistance to child victims on the basis of a child-friendly protocol, according to their individual needs. Following the adoption of the EU Strategy on the rights of the child (March 2021), the reform of the Hungarian state victim support system, which had started earlier, has continued. In 2021, 3 new Victim Support Centres opened, and two more opened in early 2022. So that by today the services provided by the Centres are available in 11 cities across the country.

The role of the Victim Support Centres is of particular importance in the Hungarian victim support system - especially for children as a special victim group - because the support provided here is so-called soft service, so it does not require the initiation of criminal proceedings. Such support ranges from emotional support from a psychologist, according to the needs of the victims, to the organisation and implementation of actual crisis intervention, victim management and follow-up, to the sharing of a wide range of information and prevention activities. For children who have suffered violence, emotional (psychological) support is particularly important, it is ensured with child psychologists in the Victim Support Centres. In order to ensure a safe and confidential environment for assistance, so-called patron rooms have been set up in the Victim Support Centres.

„According to Section 4 (1) of the Act CXXXV of 2005 on Crime Victim Support and State Compensation (hereinafter referred to as 'Victim Support Act') the Victim Support Service (hereinafter referred to as 'VSS') in Hungary supports all victims of any kind of crime in general. Thus, there are no specific provisions for child victims, because the age and other circumstances of the specific victim have to be taken into consideration in all cases and the offered services are going to be in accordance with this individual assessment.

According to Victim Support Act a person is considered a victim if he/she is an injured party of a crime (either felony or misdemeanour) committed in the territory of Hungary. A natural person can also be considered a victim of crime if he/she suffered injury as a direct consequence of a criminal act, in particular physical or emotional harm, mental shock or economic loss. Child victims are definitely considered as victims of crime, since they are usually more vulnerable physically and mentally as well. The aim of victim support is to mitigate the social, moral and pecuniary injuries of victims whose quality of life has been endangered due to a criminal act. Therefore, not only the directly affected person is considered a victim, but also his/her family member, who also has to bear the consequences and takes care of the funeral of a deceased victim. Victim support services are available for victims of every type of crimes, though only victims of violent intentional crimes may be eligible for state compensation.

VSS always provides every victim turning to it for support without eligibility check with all the necessary information about available health and social services. This informational service is always personalized. The victims can also receive basic legal assistance from the bras of VSS and there is also the possibility to receive psychological and emotional assistance. If the VSS receives information on a victim from another authority or public or private body, immediately informs this person (based on his/her known needs) in written form on his/her right to invoke for services and on which type of services he/she could be entitled for.

The VSS provides the information within the framework of the enforcement of interests by a 24/7 helpline. In this case, children can ask the victim support service for help over the phone without parental consent and representation, and the VSS will provide them with the necessary information tailored to their needs.

The VSS ensures that the bodies, institutions and authorities that come into contact with victims are aware of their rights and enforce them properly. The VSS also regularly monitors the implementation of victims' rights and requests information from the authorities, institutions and organisations in contact with victims, and shall prepare an annual analytical report on its experiences.

According to the Victim Support Act, the VSS also assembles an informational brochure containing the most important information to victims and makes this available for all authorities and government bodies, who can potentially get in touch with victims of crime. The Justice Ministerial Decree 32/2015 on the content requirements of the information brochure compiled by the victim support service provides for the minimum information which the brochure must include. According to the Decree the Ministry of Justice (as a VSS) assembles the information brochure to ensure that the victims of crime get the necessary information without delay on their rights and available services when getting in touch with an authority for the first time. The brochure can be compiled generally or for special victim groups according to their age or the criminal act they suffered from. A very important provision, that the information provided should be phrased in a clear and articulated way, in the simplest available form to be easily understood. The information brochure must at least contain the following information: the goal of services available for victims, reference to the fact that some services can only be granted under specific circumstances, the main attributions and substance of the individual services, reference to the contact information to VSS, including telephone number and e-mail address, the contact to the cost-free Victim Support Line and the information that individually assessed services can be provided by the victim support services if the victim gets in touch with them. The individually assessed services can only be provided by the VSS after the victim gets in touch with them personally via the contacts given on the information brochure.

It is important to note that whenever the VSS receives information on a child exposed to a threat of crime or mishandling, it is obliged to alert the child welfare agency immediately. If the circumstances disclosed by the service seem to expose the child's life or physical integrity to serious threats or risks, the victim support service simultaneously initiates the proceedings of the guardian authority.”

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

Strengthen guardianship systems for all unaccompanied children, including through participation to the activities of the European Guardianship Network

According to Hungarian regulations, unaccompanied minors, regardless of their age, citizenship or asylum status, are placed in the institutional system of child protection care, in the framework of which they receive full-time care of the same content and quality as children and young adults of Hungarian citizenship, including after-care provided upon request after reaching the age of majority. Therefore, like children with Hungarian citizenship who have been taken out of their families and taken into child protection care, a child protection guardian (and a deputy child protection guardian) will be assigned to them as their legal representative.

Asylum Directorate

The officers of the Asylum Directorate took part in intercultural training in 2020.

Social workers and psychologists are professionally trained to work with minors. Asylum officers conduct asylum interviews with minors in accordance with EASO recommendations. Information on the asylum procedure is explained according to the age and maturity of the child. The asylum officers pay attention to the child's socio-cultural background. Minors are always heard in the presence of the guardian.

The asylum authority appoints an asylum officer of the same sex and as close in age as possible to the minor. If necessary, the interview is conducted in several shorter sessions. According to the relevant legislation, the asylum procedure for unaccompanied minors is to be conducted in an accelerated procedure.

For the protection of the rights of unaccompanied minors, the immigration authority shall take adequate measures at the beginning of the proceeding to have a legal representative ad litem appointed.

In immigration proceedings, no one shall be allowed to suffer any disadvantage on account of his or her lack of knowledge of the Hungarian language. In immigration proceedings, the client may use his/her native language or any other language he/she understands for verbal and written communication. As per section 72 (2) of Decree No. 114/2007 (V. 24.) of the Government on the Implementation of Act II of 2007 on the Admission and Right of Residence of Third-Country Nationals “Where the data and information available at the time of the opening of the proceedings suggest that the client is an unaccompanied minor, for the protection of the rights of the unaccompanied minor, the immigration authority shall request the guardian authority without delay at the time of the opening of the proceedings to have a guardian ad litem appointed.”

As per section 72 (2a) of the same Decree „Interviewing an unaccompanied minor as a client shall be carried out in an appropriate atmosphere, in a child-friendly manner. An interview in the absence of a caretaker officer may be carried out with a view to clarifying the unaccompanied minor’s name, place and date of birth, mother’s name, home address, natural identification data and contact information of the person exercising parental supervision over him or her. Where this is justified taking into account the best interests of the unaccompanied minor, the immigration authority may impose measures in the absence of a caretaker officer to provide for the temporary placement of the child, with the proviso that the immigration authority shall inform the guardian authority thereof.”

During every return operation the legal guardian ad litem appointed from the Hungarian Child Protection has to be present at the airport. If needed the legal guardian ad litem escorts the minor or he/she entrusts the representative of the authority with the parental responsibility during the flight by an official document. The public prosecutor is responsible for the legal supervision of the execution of the return operations.

Support judicial training providers and all relevant professionals’ bodies to address the rights of the child and child friendly and accessible justice in their activities.

The Barnahus method

The provisions of Act XC of 2017 on Criminal Procedure (hereinafter: CP) and the related sectoral legislation, which entered into force on 1 January 2021, have introduced significant innovations in the performance of procedural acts relating to children.

One of the key innovations of the Criminal Law Amendment concerning the CP is that it strengthens the cooperation between the judiciary and child protection in the performance of procedural acts, modelled on the Icelandic Barnahus method. The aim and central element of the method is to clarify issues relevant to the child's hearing, both from a procedural point of view and from a psychological, psychiatric and child protection point of view.

This is a procedural act as defined in CP Article 87(1)(b)(bb) which is carried out by the authority with the assistance of a forensic psychologist or a counsellor with special qualifications in the application of the method, who provides the service (defined in Article 61(2) of Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and the Administration of Guardianship).

The execution of a procedural act as described above introduces a specific enforcement order, since in such a case the adviser is directly involved in the execution of the procedural act. In this particular procedure, the adviser not only interprets the questions and communications of the proceeding authority, but also uses his professional knowledge and methods to answer the questions put by the proceeding authority. The Barnahus method is characterised by a very close obligation to cooperate with the authorities and by the fact that, in view of the child protection history, it is possible to ensure that the procedural act is carried out by a person with genuine expertise.

The Barnahus Quality Standards on Multidisciplinary and Inter-institutional Solutions (hereinafter 'the Standards') embody operational practices and should therefore be considered as a guideline to facilitate the justice of child victims and witnesses of violence. The Barnahus model is based on the assumption that what a child says is key to the detection and investigation of child abuse. The research and clinical experience underpinning the method show that the combined effect of repeated interviews with different people, in different locations and with different organisations, and inappropriate interviewing methods, can re-traumatise the child, and that small unintended inconsistency in interviews conducted by differently competent people can lead to the child becoming a discredited witness.

The key criteria for Barnahus include that the child is interviewed according to a set protocol which ensures the quality and quantity of evidence obtained. The main aim of the interview, while avoiding re-traumatisation, is to allow the child to give as detailed an account of what happened as possible, in a way that is in line with the rules of evidence and the rights of the defence.

The introduction of the practical application of the new legal instrument is underway, with the participants in the judiciary working together to develop a methodological guide for practice.

Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration, Act CLIV of 1997 on Health Care Providers, and Act XLVII of 1997 on the Processing and Protection of Health and Related Personal Data define health care providers. It obliges the authorities to notify the child welfare service if it is suspected that the child's injury or illness is the result of abuse or neglect, or if they become aware of a circumstance indicating abuse or neglect in the child's health care. For the police, the determination of the child's vulnerability and the related measures are contained in Act No. XC of 2012 on Criminal Procedure Act No. XXXIV of 1994 on the Police, Decree 30/2011 (IX. 22.) of the Ministry of the Police on the Service Regulations of the Police.

In recent years, the police have provided information to victims about victim support services, issued a certificate to use them, allowing them to go to government offices of their own volition to enforce their need for victim assistance. From the beginning of 2021, based on the direct access of victims of crime, the so-called an opt-out victim support system has been introduced for intentional violent crimes against the person (including domestic violence). The police pass on the victims' data to the victim support service, if the legal conditions are met, who will contact them directly for help.

Develop robust alternatives to judicial action: from alternatives to detention, to the use of restorative justice and mediation in the context of civil justice

The prison service is responsible for the execution of prison sentences, including for juvenile convicts. It should be noted that the arrest of juvenile offenders in prison institutes can only be carried out in exceptional cases, on the basis of a judicial decision. In addition, in the case of juveniles, a prison sentence in a prison institute is imposed by the court only for very serious offences.

A key element of reintegration activities during detention is to develop the skills and abilities of juvenile detainees and to increase their knowledge, especially with regard to their civic obligations and rights. All these activities require professionals working with them to have an awareness and knowledge of children's rights. In acquiring this knowledge and putting it into practice, the prison service supports its staff in every way. It is of particular importance and is a guarantee that juvenile offenders serving a prison sentence, their representatives and their relatives can freely turn to the Deputy-Commissioner for Fundamental Rights – Ombudsman for Future Generations in the event of any alleged violation of their rights.

Different rules for juvenile detainees are set out in Decree 16/2014. of the Minister of Justice on the detailed rules for the execution of imprisonment, detention, pre-trial detention and detention in lieu of a fine. An essential element of that is, that during detention, the Public Guardianship authority, the guardian, the parent, the child protection service, the probation officer help to ensure the full exercise of the juvenile's right to be executed.

For juvenile detainees serving a sentence of imprisonment, the designated prison institutions also ensure the enforcement of their rights through positive discrimination procedures, during which they can file a complaint with the prosecutor in charge of the supervision and defence of the legality of the correctional system, and request a personal hearing.

Juvenile detainees, guardians, parents may file a complaint or a public interest report with the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, the Deputy-Commissioner for Fundamental Rights – Ombudsman for Future Generations, which is part of the National Preventive Mechanism. They can also file a complaint with the competent investigating authority if they suspect a criminal offence.

The Hungarian Prison Service supports local programmes to ensure that children of parents serving a prison sentence can participate in community events, awareness-raising programmes and joint events with other groups of children.

To promote children's rights, prison institutions have set up a children's corner in the visiting rooms, where the visiting child can meet the detained parent in a warm, home-like environment.

The prison service pays particular attention to the reintegration of juvenile detainees. It has made recommendations to the prison institution concerning how to implement this.

In line with Hungary's international and EU obligations, the Fundamental Law of Hungary provides that "every child shall have the right to the protection and care necessary for his or her proper physical, mental and moral development." Furthermore, it states that by means of separate measures, Hungary shall protect families and children.

To the effective implementation of provisions in the Fundamental Law, Hungarian laws offer a comprehensive framework for the protection of children. This includes financial, infrastructural and legal elements from the broad state support for families with children, through the maintenance of an appropriate institutional framework for the protection of children to legislative solutions. Procedural codes take the vulnerability of children widely into account. Independent authorities and institutions, including the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, monitor the implementation of the rights of the child. In urgent cases, the legislator reacts with utmost diligence.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child also noted with appreciation the Hungarian legislative, institutional and policy measures are taken to implement the CRC, in particular, the Digital Child Protection Strategy and the implementation of the Barnahus model.

In Hungary, the legal institutions of conditional prosecutor suspension and victim-offender mediation are the tools of diversion from formal court processing in the field of criminal justice. Both diversion tools can be used in the cases of juveniles. It is obligatory to apply probation supervision in the cases of juveniles with the ordering of conditional prosecutor suspension. Tasks of implementation of probation

supervision with conditional prosecutor suspension and providing victim-offender mediation are carried out by the Probation Service in Hungary. In 2021 the number of probation supervision with conditional prosecutor suspension cases in progress was 2541 and the number of victim-offender cases in progress was 352 for juveniles.

The aim of the Act LXXX of 2003 on Legal Aid (hereinafter referred to as "Jst.") was to create an institutional system in which socially disadvantaged persons may be provided with expert legal advice and procedural representation to assert their rights and solve their disputes in both litigious, non-judicial and out-of-court cases. According to the Act, the National Legal Aid Service (the competent departments of the metropolitan and county government offices) may grant legal aid in extrajudicial cases, furthermore in civil and criminal procedures. Based on the Act, among others, victims may also be provided legal aid in both extrajudicial cases (legal advice, drafting a document) and criminal procedures.

Victims can get immediate legal advice - during office hours - from the clerks of either the victim support services or the legal aid services for free in simple legal cases without the application form.

According to the current regulation the certification of victim status offers judgement with positive conditions when applying for legal aid, so the victims of the crimes are entitled to resorting assistance more favourably.

In criminal procedures minors - who are offended or acting as private parties - are also entitled for legal assistance without respect to their financial relations, or examining their wealth (unless the party already received actual legal representation or its expenses as assistance in another state aid system).

„Raising awareness of the protection and rights of children among those who have regular contact with children is highly important. Thus, according to Section 7 (1) 5.6.7. and 9. of the Decree 22/2010 (XII. 28.) of the Ministry of Justice those working in the field of victim support undergo training and examinations, the subjects and requirements of which include the legal provisions on victim support, basic knowledge of crime prevention, criminology and victimology, trauma after crime and how to deal with it, and basic knowledge of child and youth protection.

The key goals of the national programme of the National Office for the Judiciary titled ‘Child-centred Justice’ are to protect the interests of children in court procedures and to continuously educate the judges hearing cases involving minors.”

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

Support media literacy actions as part of education, to develop children’s ability to critically evaluate online content, and detect disinformation and abusive material

Internet Round-table Conference

Under the Act CCXLV of 2013 to amend certain laws to protect children, the Internet Round-table Conference for the Protection of Children was set up by the President of the Media- and Infocommunications Authority. As a 21-member assessment, consultation and recommendation body, the Round Table aim to promote the protection of minors on the World Wide Web and to support the work of the President of the Authority. To this end, it develops resolutions and recommendations for the dissemination of child-friendly internet, including the effective use of filtering software, and for increasing the media awareness of children and their parents.

The Internet Round-table shall make out and publish recommendations for providers of internet access so as to facilitate the development and selection of content-filtering software that meets the requirements set out in legislation. The Round-table Conference shall encourage service providers to coordinate their efforts in developing their own self-regulatory policies relating to content-filtering software, and shall provide assistance to that end.

The Magic Valley Media Literacy Education Centres—established by the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH)—promote the media literacy education of students aged 9–16 by providing them with hands-on learning experience in a state-of-the-art studio environment. All of our

workshops focus on core topics of media and information literacy. With the help of our highly qualified and experienced instructors, kids are led through the different workshops—newscast, advertising, movies, image, sound, internet—and learn about the choices made in the field of media in a playful and experience-based manner.

At Magic Valley, we created our Internet workshops to help kids develop their ability to critically evaluate online content and protect themselves when they come across harmful or illegal content or face abusive behaviour in cyberspace. In our Netrisks workshop the purpose of the activity is to provide teenagers and adolescents with tools for coping with the dangers of the internet, in an informal, discussion-based manner. We have stories on cyberbullying, sexting, grooming, fact-check, online personality, privacy. All 60-minute workshops include a total of 5-10 minutes worth of video material. The final outcome is always a good starting point for a group discussion and a summary of the lessons learned.

Our Netbrowser workshop was designed to promote kids' media literacy skills by helping them find, evaluate and utilize online content. As we examine an article or an online ad that contains surprising, exaggerating or even shocking information, we point out in several steps how they can find out that the article or ad at hand is a hoax or it contains misleading information, disinformation or fake news. By going through these specific steps, we help them develop their ability to recognize different types of false information. We also show kids the economic interests behind pseudo-scientific websites.

Our centres provide online educational materials and teaching resources on media literacy for media educators and teachers, which are downloadable free of charge from the website of the centres. In addition, at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, our instructors created a closed Facebook group for media teachers, where they have been sharing teaching resources developed by them in order to support and ease teachers' work during the pandemic. Over 1,000 teachers have joined the group by now. <https://buvosvolgy.hu/tudastar>; <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mediaszertar>

Influencers have gained growing popularity in recent years among the kids who belong to our target audience, so we have come up with the idea of teaching media literacy skills with the help of popular influencers. In our Navigator video series, we focus on issues like how to spot fake news, what makes an influencer and what is behind the scenes in a reality show. In these videos, popular influencers present these topics and draw conclusions in a way that is entertaining and educational at the same time.

As part of the corporate social responsibility program of NMHH, we have worked in close partnership with the SOS Children's Villages, Hungary since 2014. Since the underprivileged kids in foster care are the most exposed to harmful or illegal online content and the risks of harmful or illegal contact online (different forms of sexual abuse, sexting, cyber-grooming etc.), over the years we have offered them several interactive programs focusing on different aspects on internet safety. We have made an effort to help them spot abusive online behaviour while offering workshops to foster parents and child protection specialists on online risks and opportunities, digital parenting, conscious digital device usage and screen time management. We have also helped them gain a better understanding of how they can be more engaged in their kids' lives by sharing media experiences with them.

In 2017 and 2020, the Digital Literacy Development Unit of the NMHH conducted a big-scale (N=2000+2000) representative national research on 7-16-year-old children's and their parents' media use, media literacy and parents' digital parenting strategies. The results of the latest research can be downloaded from here:

https://english.nmhh.hu/article/224269/Research_on_media_usage_consumption_and_literacy_of_716year_old_children_and_their_parents

Since we opened our centres, we have made a conscious effort to help parents become more aware of the media consumption trends of their kids and help them become better digital parents. In 2020, we launched a webpage called "Child on the net", with the aim of helping parents become informed about their children's online lives and understand their digital habits: <https://gyerekaneten.hu/>

We also run regular campaigns on the various topics of media literacy, including the cooperation with Hungarian influencers popular among the Hungarian youth: <https://nmhh.hu/onlinearcok>;

https://nmhh.hu/internethotline_nemoke;

[https://nmhh.hu/para/;](https://nmhh.hu/para/)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJXiw58CdSOwKX8P5q0VN2g>

The IH was launched in 2005 in Hungary and has been operated by the Authority since 2011. Over the last 10 years, the IH has developed very good relations with other organisations working on child protection and children's rights, including the colleagues of the national child helpline (116-111, <https://kek-vonal.hu/>).

In addition, in order to develop people's ability to critically evaluate online content, the National Crime Prevention Council of Hungary supported a humorous awareness raising campaign about online frauds. (Incredible opportunities videos:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZ7ANFhCF4V2czBEsAm4oNfebYMW_LjOr)

Ensure effective equal access to digital tools and high-speed Internet connection, digital literacy, accessible online educational material and education tools etc. for all children

In order to implement the digital work order ordered in connection with the COVID-19 epidemic, we conducted a survey on the availability of technical conditions for participation in digital education and communication with relatives in the case of children in child protection care. We have been cooperating with donor organizations for all those where these conditions are not available, and it has also been possible to purchase digital equipment from a central budget source, as a result of which a total of 2,793 computers have been delivered to foster families, orphanages and correctional facilities.

The Action Plan is related to the Government's Decree 1488/2016. (IX. 2.) on the creation of a Safe Internet Service for Children, on conscious and value-creating Internet use and on Hungary's Digital Child Protection Strategy, names the organization and conduct of free media literacy training for those working in the child protection system in the areas of media literacy that are necessary for the performance of the work of those concerned. Media literacy training for child protection professionals will be organized in the priority projects EFOP-3.8.2-16-2016-00001 and VEKOP-7.5.1-16-2016-00001 „Development of Social Human Capacity” under the name “Digital Child Protection Advanced Studies” for professional positions defined in child protection institutions (at least 550 people). The curriculum of the training and its qualification has been completed. Effective awareness-raising and awareness-building for children placed in residential institutions cannot be achieved without the training of professionals who deal with them.

In prisons

In prison institutions, electronic communication and the online presence of detainees are limited for security reasons, and they are subject to strict regulations.

Prison institutions can organise computer training courses for detainees who request it, which is particularly important for juvenile detainees.

The KIOSZK system has been installed in prison institutions, enabling detainees to submit requests and complaints electronically, and to examine national, local and personal documents and to check their financial balance electronically on the KIOSZK device.

Online contact with relatives has been particularly valued in the epidemic situation. For all detainees, the prison institution provide contact with relatives for the period of time corresponding to the regime categories, currently through the Skype service.

In the epidemiological situation, the education of detainees was provided online, with appropriate security guarantees. This possibility will continue to be available once the epidemic situation has subsided, particularly in the areas of education, extracurricular activities and self-training.

Digital pedagogical methods

The Government of Hungary, to widely disseminate digital pedagogical methods and support their application in public educational institutions, has taken several measures in recent years.

To ensure an equitable and efficient operation of public education and vocational training, and increase students' digital competences, the Digital Education Strategy of Hungary adopted in 2016 ensures the

presence of pre-defined digital equipment in public education and vocational training institutions, paying special attention to students with special needs. The objectives include the provision of adequate quantity and quality of digital educational content, progressive infrastructure, and suitable digital equipment in all schools. Achieving these goals has also been supported by several EU projects in recent years. As a result of these development measures, the bandwidth has been expanded at thousands of public educational facilities at the national level, and a WiFi network has been constructed where it was needed. In addition, more than 100,000 ICT tools have been placed in public education institutions.

Another goal of the Strategy in public education is to ensure that school leavers (either going on to tertiary education or the labour market) have all the necessary digital competences and are prepared for life-long learning. It focuses on infrastructure development, within which three main goals are being accomplished, such as connecting schools to broadband networks; wireless network development within the premises of public educational institutions; providing institutions and teachers with ICT equipment to support teaching and learning. Another area of the Strategy is public educational learning material and methodology development, including in-service teacher training. Additional efforts are being taken as part of the strategy, primarily under the Digital Child Protection Strategy of Hungary. The goals of the latter strategy mostly focus on competence development in the field of media literacy, and awareness-raising concerning the problems and solutions of digital child protection with the pupils, educational professionals, and parents as target groups.

In Hungary's national recovery and resilience plan, we set the goal of improving the institutions' ICT equipment. To this end, we plan to

- equip schools with enough modern computers year-to-year to provide each 5th and 9th grader with one for personal use (about 100,000 computers per year);
- provide schools with devices, especially for teachers (55,000 computers);
- improve 6,000 classrooms with interactive flat-panel displays to support digital education;
- improve computational and algorithmic thinking and creativity by providing ICT tools for schools;
- offer digital and digital pedagogical competence development programs for teachers (workshops, embedded programs, training, self-education opportunities), we will motivate them to participate in such programs.

“Tanoda” Programme- digitalisation

During the covid epidemic, the usual ways of communication changed, creating a new situation in the life of the Tanoda. In many cases, face-to-face meetings have been replaced by electronic means. The Internet, telephone and laptop have brought a new level of cooperation between families and schools. Parents were usually in contact with professionals by telephone. Some families living in deep poverty do not have a digital device in their household, so in several cases the school provided them with a notebook and internet service. The computers still available in the Tanoda allow pupils to participate in on-line lessons and to complete their homework. In the future, we plan to improve the infrastructure of the Tanoda, including the purchase of additional digital equipment.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

In order to ensure the rights of children and women, the Prison Code regulates the co-housing of mother and child, according to which the woman detainee may request a postponement of the execution of the prison sentence. In addition, the commencement of imprisonment shall be postponed, without application, ex officio, until the end of the twelfth month following the expected date of confinement at the latest, in the case of a detainee who is more than twelve weeks pregnant, or who is caring for a child under one-year-old. The responsible judge shall decide on this matter.

If the convicted woman has reached the twelfth week of pregnancy and the expected date of delivery would precede the date of release, she must declare whether she wishes to have the prison sentence interrupted. When considering applications for a suspension of sentence submitted during pregnancy or immediately after childbirth, the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration. Suspension

of sentence is decided by the governor for a period of up to thirty days in a calendar year, by the director general for a period of between thirty-one days and ninety days in a calendar year, and by the Minister responsible for the prison service for a longer period.

The mother or pregnant woman can initiate the pardon procedure like any other detainee. The pardon authority may remit the whole or the remaining part of the sentence, reduce it or suspend it on probation.

The arrest shall be carried out in the mother-child unit in the case of a woman whose child was born during the execution of the arrest and there are no grounds for excluding co-housing or if the child was placed in the mother-child unit by the court with provisional effect at the time of the arrest order, and if she requests so. If the public guardianship authority has not given its consent to the child being brought up in the mother-child unit, the ordered co-housing must be terminated. Placement in the mother-child unit shall in all cases be on request. The mother may decide to care for the child through her family or by other means.

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

Concerning CRPD, Hungary's 2nd and 3rd periodic reports were defended on 8-9-10 March 2022, during which the representatives of the prison service followed the debate as observers and provided the necessary answers to the questions.

Based on the order of the Director General of the Prison Service, training on the UN convention against torture, relevant provisions and practical knowledge of the Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and its additional protocols and the CRPD convention on the rights of persons with disabilities were provided for all staff of all prison institutions in the first half of 2018, in accordance with the recommendation of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights in the framework of the national preventive mechanism.

1, National Disability Programme

The action plan for the implementation of the National Disability Programme states that the basic services necessary for the care of disabled persons in their own homes and families, in particular support services, day-care centres and basic community services, need to be developed, which will of course also ensure improved access for children of all ages to **services which also target minors**.

- The calls for **proposals for the expansion and development of the infrastructure of basic social services**, with a budget of more than HUF 30 billion, launched in the 2014-2020 programming period under the Operational Programme for Spatial and Urban Development, aim to make the services specified in the Social Act and the Child Protection Act available to people living in settlements with a shortage of services, by creating new infrastructure for services, building new places and improving the infrastructure of existing services. A total of 840 basic services and child welfare facilities have been renewed or upgraded (38 support services, 194 daycare facilities, 181 home help services, 20 community care services).

2, Deinstitutionalization - Strategy for the replacement of large-scale institutions - inclusion of aspects relating to minors

In 2011, the Government adopted a strategy for the replacement of large institutions, replacing social institutions with more than 50 places for disabled people and psychiatric patients with residential care and supportive housing for independent and self-determined living, instead of residential care. The Strategy was reviewed and supplemented in 2017 and 2019 in the light of experience to date.

While the 2011 replacement strategy treated persons with disabilities in a uniform way, without age differentiation, the second revised concept in 2019 emphasises the issue of replacing special target groups with different needs, including minors in institutions.

The Revised Concept also focuses on the target group of minors living in childcare in addition to adults. An important element of the Revised Concept is the reallocation of the placement of children in care institutions who have been removed from their families by an official measure and are in specialised child protection care, towards supported housing under the Social Welfare Act, in addition to foster care.

As of 1 January 2019, the conditions for the provision of supported housing for minors have been strengthened by the amendment to the Social Code, which defines the mandatory service elements. From 2019, the service elements of supervision and meals must be provided for minors in supported housing, with supervision being provided only in person.

In line with the Revised Concept, the Child Protection Act has been amended as of 1 January 2020: the forms of care provided in the home for the children in care have been extended to include supported housing under Article 75 of the Social Code.

The Revised Concept included children living in institutions in the target group of the replacement, stating that large institutionalisation does not provide adequate care for minors either. A complex needs assessment has been specified for minors to define the range of services that can be provided in supported housing. The aim is that in the future, the social care system will provide supported housing for under-18s.

To develop and improve the accessibility and responsiveness of systemic services for people with disabilities.

A disability adviser with specialised knowledge makes information, knowledge and skills from different disability-related sectors (social, health, education, labour market, etc.) available in one place. In the context of its activities, it provides, inter alia, counselling to the disabled person and his/her family members; it cooperates with providers of social, child welfare and child protection services, institutions, primary and specialised health care providers, education and training providers, employment services, transport, sports, cultural and other leisure activities, other social organisations, advocacy groups, religious institutions and communities to ensure access to public services for the disabled person and his/her family; assisting in the loan of certain lifestyle support equipment and the provision of specialised services.

In the 3 years since the introduction of the disability advisory service, it has clearly proven to be a service that has delivered the maximum professional results. In order to ensure that the service remains accessible after the project closes in 2021, Parliament adopted an amendment to the law in autumn 2020, which will ensure that disability counselling will continue to be provided from 1 January 2022 in the 21 family and child welfare centres designated by the Minister for Social Affairs and Pensions, thus contributing to improving the access of people with disabilities and their families to public services, information and benefits, their quality of life and life management skills, and to achieving social inclusion.

The Disability Advisory Network will receive an annual budget of HUF 230 million from national sources.

In Synergy with Other Relevant National Strategies and Plans

The developmental directions of public education for the oncoming 10 years are determined by the 'Public Education Strategy of Hungary 2021-2030 prepared for the European Union' (Gov. Decree No 1551/2020. (VIII. 25.) (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy).

The crucial priority for the oncoming development period is the development of quality inclusive education – also regarding the right of children to education – as well as the development of the access to it through realizing supporting interventions. Building on previous developments, increased attention will be paid to improving underperforming schools and the academic success and attainment of groups of pupils most at risk of dropping out.

In terms of synergic alignment, the developmental directions of the Strategy are in line with the aspects of domestic and applicable European Union strategies, relating to public education, specifically with those of the draft policy proposals of the European Commission for the 2021-2027 grant period regarding the education and training system.

These are as follows:

- evidence-based systems for skills anticipation and forecasting (tracking mechanisms and services for quality and effective guidance for learners of all ages);
- measures to ensure equal access to quality, affordable, relevant, and inclusive education, participation in and completion of education and training;

- developing coordination mechanisms across all levels of education and training, and clear assignment of responsibilities between the relevant national and/or regional bodies;
- arrangements for monitoring, evaluation, and review of the strategic policy framework;
- measures to support teachers as regards appropriate learning methods, assessment, and validation of key competences;
- measures to promote mobility of learners and teachers and transnational collaboration of education stakeholders

The Strategy, as well as the statutory framework of public education, fulfils the requirement of compliance with the above criteria, promoting the rights of children/pupils.

The Strategy sets out measures to promote equal opportunities and prevent segregation. Moreover, the Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education and the Act CXXV of 2003 on equal treatment and the promotion of equal opportunities explicitly prohibit segregation; any discriminatory measures taken by the institutions or their providers are unlawful.

The Amendment of Government Decree No 229/2012 on the implementation of the Act on National Public Education, which entered into force in April 2018, built-in stronger safeguards by requiring compulsory review of equal opportunities plans in public education at least every 3 years– this regular review was not previously required. The measure serves the improvement of inclusive education, and the prevention of segregation, including the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the tasks to be carried out by the cooperating partners. The HRDOP 3.1.5. the project, which ended in 2021, provided methodological support for the revision of the equal opportunities plans, and the methodological development was integrated into the process of implementing these plans.

According to Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education, the prioritised duty of public education is to provide for early childhood development and to support the most efficient development and social integration of children with special educational needs, as well as children facing difficulties concerning integration, learning or behaviour.

Children with special educational needs

The professional diagnostical committee of the county pedagogical assistance service institution shall issue an expert opinion on the basis of their complex psychological, pedagogical-special educational and medical examination. Based on the result of these examinations, the pedagogical assistance service institution shall make recommendations on the special treatment, education as well as the place and method of the education of the child with special educational needs or facing difficulties in integration, learning or behaviour.

The professional diagnostical committee informs the parent about the list of institutions which his/her child with special educational needs can take part in early development and care, kindergarten education or special education aiming his/her development and fulfil compulsory education. The public education institution is chosen by the parent among those recommended by the professional diagnostical committee. In educational institutions caring after children with special educational needs, compulsory habilitation and rehabilitation class activities (development) shall be organised for health and pedagogical purposes. The healthcare and pedagogical habilitation and rehabilitation lesson always requires special educator or conductor.

If the individual capabilities and the development of the student with special educational needs so require, the principal shall exempt him/her on the basis of the opinion of the expert committee

- a) from numerical evaluation and assessment and require written evaluation and assessment instead,
- b) from evaluation and assessment of certain subjects or parts of subjects, with the exception of practical training.

In the secondary school leaving examination, students can choose another subject instead of the subjects as defined above, in accordance with the examination rules.

Upon the request of examinees with special education needs substantiated with the expert opinion of a committee of experts, and under the authorisation of the principal,

- a) the time allotted for answering the written questions for the examinee with special education needs shall be increased by a maximum of thirty minutes,
- b) it shall be allowed for the examinee with special education needs to use the tools generally used during their studies,
- c) examinees with special educational needs may sit an oral examination instead of a written examination. Upon the request of examinees with special educational needs substantiated with the expert opinion of a committee of experts, and under the authorisation of the principal,
 - a) the preparation time allotted for the examinee with special education needs shall be increased by a maximum of ten minutes,
 - b) examinees with special education needs may pass an oral examination in writing.

When calculating the number of students in kindergarten groups, school classes or groups in dormitories students with special educational needs with mild intellectual disability, physical development disturbances or speech disorder shall be considered as two; children / students with sensory (visual, hearing) or locomotor disturbances, moderate intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder, and with multiple disabilities shall be considered as three in case they are educated together with other children / students.

According to data (1 October 2021), 83 549 children with special educational needs were enrolled in public education. 55 674 children with special education needs participate in inclusive education. The proportion of inclusive education has increased to 67% by 2021. The proportion of inclusive institutions is increasing year by year. In parallel, the number of inclusive institution is increasing. According to data (October 2021) 80% (4314) of the institution deals with children with special educational needs (in 2015 the number of these institutions was 4050). 94% of these institutions provide inclusive education. The number of settlements is 3155, so the territorial coverage is significant.

The education of children / students with special educational needs require the prevalence of the following conditions:

- a) the involvement of a special needs teacher, conductor with appropriate skills to educate children / students according to the type and the rate of their special education needs, special curricula, course books and other instruments,
- b) in case of individual educational plans, integrated kindergarten education, school education, developmental education and developmental teaching, a special needs teacher with special qualifications in line with the requirements set by the committee of experts, furthermore, special curricula, course books for the forms and special medical and technical equipment,
- c) the committee of experts' decision on the areas to be developed.

Educational institutions involved in special education have to employ special educators, conductors. Experts with appropriate professional qualification as required for the education of children / students with special education needs may also be provided through the mobile network of special educators or conductors.

Children with special education needs are entitled to schoolbooks free of charge during their studies. The Copyright Act classifies as free use if the book/product solely serves the fulfilment of the needs of people with disability and does not exceed the extent justified by the goal. Furthermore, in case of pupils with special educational needs, when certain circumstances apply, textbooks, exercise books, work sheets, digital information tools not on the official list of textbooks can be purchased from central budget support.

Children with special education needs and children using certain pedagogical assistance services are benefitted from reimbursement of travel expenses emerging when travelling to the institution providing service.

The number of special needs teacher/conductor in public education is 9999. In the 2010/2011 school year their number was 5695, consequently significant improvement can be observed. Before 2006 only one higher education institution trained special needs teachers. From September 2019 eight universities and from 2020 nine offer special needs teacher training, which is key in improving the supply of specialists in rural areas. Additionally to the growth of the number of training institutions, the number of students

enrolled in the bachelor's degree studies in special needs education has increased significantly, from 937 in 2013 to 1852 in 2021. Klebelsberg Scholarship Programme was extended to 'special needs teachers' students. In parallel, 'traditional' teacher training pays particular attention as well to ensuring that all teachers have the basic knowledge necessary to educate children and pupils with special educational needs and multiple disadvantages. In case of teacher training and early childhood education, curricula include content on special education, inclusive education or other developmental pathways as a compulsory or optional element. In case of teacher training courses, the training and outcome requirements (both current and previous legislation) contain specific provision for preparing to the education of pupils with special educational needs.

The education of pre-school children is shaped by the "Basic Programme of Pre-School Education", while the education of school pupils is determined by the "National Core Curriculum" and the framework curricula created on its basis. Deviations from the National Curriculum and the 'majority' framework curricula and methodological guidelines are contained in the compulsory guidelines (broken down into areas of special educational needs).

Pupils learn Braille, augmentative and alternative communication in schools. Children who are not yet enrolled in school receive early childhood development and care, including alternative communication appropriate for the child. Sign language is taught in schools for deaf pupils in grades 7 and 8, but the regulations on the education of deaf pupils provide for the possibility of teaching in sign language. The necessary measures have been initiated for the introduction of sign language as the basis for bilingual education.

The Sign Language Act was amended in 2021 in order to specify the conditions under which Hungarian sign language must be taught, the institutions in which it must be taught, as well as the required qualifications of the sign language teacher. It also states that Hungarian sign language teachers must be registered. The authority responsible for the registry of sign language teachers was appointed in 2021.

Other support system is the pedagogical assistance services institutions:

In every county (and in the capital), there is one pedagogical assistance service, which has a sub-institution and units in every district. These are under unified leadership and professional protocols. The pedagogical assistance services' duties include:

- special education consulting, early development, education and care, (early intervention and prevention, early childhood education and care);
- developmental education (after early development, but before school attendance by children with severe and multiple disabilities);
- expert activity (professional diagnostics, diagnostical committee);
- educational guidance;
- speech therapy;
- further study and career counselling;
- conductive educational service;
- adapted physical education;
- school and pre-school psychology service; and
- supporting particularly talented children/students.

Since 2013, the entire provision of specialised teaching services has been reorganised. The aim was to achieve the most complete provision of services possible, by creating single profile institutions, with unified management, standardised procedures and professional protocols, and a unified IT monitoring system. Pedagogical assistance services are available in more than 300 sites allowing people to access services close to their homes. The structural and professional changes have focused particularly on two tasks: early development; expert committee.

Since 2015, the number of children and pupils benefitting from specialised pedagogical services has increased by almost 100 000 (503 000 children and pupils according to the last data release). Within this, the number of children receiving early development has been steadily rising, more than doubling in recent years.

In 2015, the standardisation of the WPPSI-IV (Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence - Fourth Edition) test in Hungary was completed (and its dissemination started in 2016), which was developed with the aim of minimising cultural influences and the results are evaluated using a Non-Verbal Index. The age range of the test is 2 years 6 months - 7 years 7 months. Developments over the past twelve years have resulted in the following modern and current standardised intelligence tests being used: WISC, WAIS, WPPSI-IV, UNIT2.

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

There are various structures and frameworks in place that promote children’s participation in political and democratic life, including:

- The National Children’s Policy (2017) which was drafted in close collaboration with children and wherein child participation was one of the three main pillars in addition to child protection and child provision. The main policy actions put forward to implement child participation in Malta include: awareness raising; empowerment, inclusion and active involvement; engagement and consideration of children’s views in policymaking; voting rights for children aged 16 years and over; and systematic review of legislation, policies and services;
- Workshops in primary and secondary schools carried out by the Office of the Commissioner for Children (CFC) in order to: inform children of their rights according to the UNCRC, as well as familiarize children with a child-friendly version of the National Children’s Policy. These workshops also provide space for children to voice their ideas on suggestions for policymaking. As part of its functions, the Commissioner for Children, also chairs the Council for Children which is a multi-disciplinary team made up of professionals and children;
- The National Youth Council which engages 14 and 15 year-olds who are not eligible to vote in elections to put forward political issues and proposals to Parliament;
- The *National Inclusive Education Framework* and the *Policy of Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion* that put forward children’s education on active citizenship and equality, child participation and awareness of children’s rights for professionals;
- School Councils which are a forum where teachers and parents work together for the benefit of the children and the school. Children are involved in electing the representatives and in deciding their roles;
- EkoSkola regional committees whereby a wide multi-stakeholder team, including children, are involved;
- Legal frameworks (e.g. the Minor Protection [Alternative Care] Act) whereby children’s voices can be heard (e.g. through child advocates), especially those that enable the safe participation of children in judicial and administrative proceedings;
- The newly set up Regional Children’s Councils in Local Government whereby children will be able to elect their peers who will represent their interests at a community level; and
- The dissemination of information by various entities to children on issues which directly or indirectly affect them, such as education on health (e.g. mental health, healthy eating, etc.), citizenship (work-life balance, career, gender-pay gap, etc.), some of which are already child-friendly and provide a space for child participation.

Building on the Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT) carried out by Malta in 2019, the Ministry for Social Policy and Children’s Rights (MSPC) will be applying for EU Centralised Funds to develop a Child Participation Online Platform (webtool and app).

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

The Child Guarantee is in the process of being drafted. Information in relation to measures will be communicated in due course.

Malta implements and reinforces the Youth Guarantee while also promoting the involvement of young people in Youth Guarantee Services. The latest Youth Guarantee Scheme for Malta 2014-2020 has contributed towards a record-breaking growth of youth entering and remaining in the labour market. As highlighted within the *2020 Youth Guarantee: Country by Country Report*, Malta’s unemployment rate stood at a record low (3.7% in 2020), where young people aged 15-24 contributed to 9.1% of this

statistic. The share of young people aged 15-24 years not in employment, education or training (NEETs) is 7.3% and thus significantly below the EU average of 10.5%. Furthermore, the implementation of the Maltese Youth Guarantee scheme remains effective in terms of delivery of offers, with 62.5% of those aged 15-24 years that left the scheme in 2018 taking up an offer within 4 months. This is significantly lower when compared to 2016 (96.2%).

In line with EU and international frameworks as well as other national policies, the *National Youth Policy 2021-2030*, that was conducted in close collaboration with young people, is a primary contributor to the Youth Guarantee and aims to provide proactive supports and services on a regional, local and national spectrum.

Malta identifies children as a priority target group in national health strategies. The following policy documents target the population universally whilst acknowledging child-specific needs:

- The *Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020-2030* acknowledges the fact that half of all mental disorders start from a young age, and that Malta is observing an increasing trend in risk of developing a number of disorders, namely Depression. Therefore, the strategy aims to promote discussion regarding mental illnesses in schools, further expand provision of training for educators to support children and offer universal mental health promotion programmes in schools to both students and parents, all with the goal to overcome any existing stigma and improving detection of mental illnesses from childhood.
- The *National Cancer Plan 2017-2021* aims to increase awareness and better reinforce programmes aimed at children fighting with the illness, whilst also focusing on prevention through the: i) publication of a Tobacco Control Strategy which urges reductions in smoking rates in selected high-risk groups, these including pregnant women and children; and ii) protection of children from tobacco smoke in public places as well as intensified awareness of the dangers of passive smoking for children. The Plan also makes reference to the European Code Against Cancer which stresses the importance of vaccination programmes for children.
- The *National Strategy for the Elimination of Hepatitis C Virus 2018-2025* is targeted at children born to mothers infected with HCV and aims to prevent the infection by improving safety of transfusion of unscreened blood, improve safety in drug injection practices (such as Child Injections), as well as perform contact tracing on all persons with a new diagnosis of HCV.
- *Transgender Healthcare* dedicates a section on Children and Adolescents, which are identified as a population in need of particular care and attention with regards to transgender healthcare. Acknowledging the distress children may feel when undergoing gender dysmorphia, this strategy guarantees specialised and psychosocial services in order to emotionally comfort any mental consequences which may arise.

With regards to mental health for children, Malta has constructed networks with families, schools, youths and other relevant stakeholders and institutions through the following:

- The National Strategy for Mental Health in Malta 2020-2030 puts a special focus on children whereby it addresses the broader context and determinants of health, while pursuing inter-sectoral initiatives with schools and workplaces as a priority in the prevention of mental illness. This national strategy embraces a shift of care towards community-based support.
- Free of charge specialised mental health services that involve the family of the child or youth, and work with other entities where necessary. These include:
 - i) Child-oriented psychiatric hospital services and mental healthcare in the community;
 - ii) Evaluation, information and advice, intervention and provision to support children with various special educational needs;
 - iii) Child-oriented and multi-disciplinary social work services for vulnerable children aged 13-18 years and their families;

iv) An outreach service to help families with complex needs resulting from intergenerational cycles of difficulty, particularly where minors are present. Support includes family therapy, parenting programmes, psychotherapy and psychoeducation with a view to enhance the quality of family life.

Malta works towards achieving the targets proposed within the European Education Area through the various ongoing measures that are being undertaken in line with the following Policies/Strategies/Frameworks:

- The *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024* aims to: i) reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools, decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy and science and technology competence; ii) support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers; iii) increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning; and iv) raise levels of student retainment and attainment in further, vocational and tertiary education and training;
- The *National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2021–2030* aims to reduce the number of individuals who are socially excluded because of a lack of or a low level of literacy skills;
- The *Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta* was launched in 2014 to implement focused attention as from early childhood to post-secondary education;
- The *'Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion'* and *'A National Inclusive Education Framework'* were launched in 2019 to ensure inclusive education measures to all children. By acting as a guide to educators, professional and parents, this policy aims to reduce gaps in educational outcomes, increase learner participation, raise student attainment levels and support educational achievement for all children, thus moving away from a one size fits all approach;
- The *Early Childhood Education and Care (0–7 years): National Policy Framework for Malta and Gozo* was published in October 2021 to outline its strategic plan for achieving the five goals concerning accessibility, the workforce, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation and governance and funding;
- *Freedom to Live: Malta's 2021–2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons* aims towards the achievement of more disability rights in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals across multiple spheres, including amongst others; research and data collection, awareness-raising, accessibility and participation, relationships and sexuality, education and healthcare;
- The *Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) Policy: The Way Forward 2020-2030* includes a holistic and inclusive approach, that not only targets students at risk but also students who have already dropped out, their families and communities.

Malta continues to implement the relevant actions recommended in the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 in the area of education and training through the following ongoing measures:

- **A one-year induction course offered to non-Maltese students** who cannot communicate in Maltese or English; and an intensive course during the summer to cater for the needs of those migrant learners who do not understand English and Maltese and who were finding language barriers.

- **Community Liaison Workers (CLWs)** work with the psychosocial support teams in colleges to follow cases of children out of school or at risk of social exclusion and poverty. The CLWs work in particular with families of migrant learners who are at risk of underachievement or school drop-out or who are not attending school, through explaining education-related procedures, helping the family to overcome challenges by facilitating access to services.

- All of the myriad of free or subsidised benefits and services by the educational system in Malta are equally offered to migrant children.

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

Malta raises awareness of, and invests in, capacity-building measures for a more effective prevention of violence, as well as to protect victims and witnesses, including those with the necessary safeguards for child suspects or accused. Social protection outreach measures that target children are provided via an extensive network through dedicated Government agencies.

Social welfare services are provided to children and their families particularly to:

- i) prevent violence against children;
- ii) protect victims and witnesses; and
- iii) provide the necessary safeguards for child suspects or accused.

Outreach initiatives are also provided via online websites, freephone, weekly participation on tv and radio programmes and social media platforms. The following are a few examples:

- Servizz.gov Family Hub provides assistance on social security and social welfare.
- Leap Centres undertake the distribution of food packages to vulnerable families and facilitate consent for a home visit by a mentor.
- National events and targeted newsletters on various topics disseminated to educators, school psychosocial teams, parents and students.
- A team of youth and social workers targets NEETs and conducts door-to-door visits to maximise outreach. Youths who are either registering for work or inactive can access services directly at Job Centres or online through a youth specific online portal.
- Government entities and agencies provide information, tools and resources on websites for children and young people, parents and carers as well as professionals.

Government also provides services of prevention from violence and early intervention targeted to (potential) child victims and perpetrators. The following are main measures in this area: 24/7 supportline²³ and an Out of Hours Emergency Service for children (including missing children); Domestic Violence Services; Intake and Family Support Service; Community Services; interventions and services targeting young people experiencing precarious situations; Programmes and Resources for Positive Parenting; and Prevention and Intervention Services against addictions.

Other social welfare services and benefits provide continuity of care and protection for children in out-of-home care or with other disadvantaged backgrounds, including children who have experienced violence:

- *Looked After Children (LAC) Services*: Tailor-made care plans and monitoring in line with the Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act for children in need of being looked after/in out-of-home care/living away from their natural family.

- *Fostering Services* that mainly work on: i) eligibility of prospective foster carers; ii) carrying out foster care placement agreements and their regular revision; iii) drawing up review reports on foster carers; and iv) permanent fostering and adoption through fostering whereby minors placed in foster care have less chance of being lost in care.

- *Foster Care Allowance/Child in Care Benefit (Residential Service)* amounting to €110 per week is awarded to authorised foster carers providing a foster care service to a child. Similarly, the *Child in Care Benefit (Residential Service)* amounting to €110 per week is provided to residential/community children's homes.

- *Adoption Services* support families who are in the process of adopting a child/ren as well as families who adopted as well as facilitating processes for both local and international adoptions.

²³ This deals with all helplines, including *EU Emotional Support Helpline and EU Child Helpline*.

- *After Care Service* for children in care aged 15-17 years: Persons leaving institutional care are provided with support, through an after-care plan with an assigned key worker to follow them, to ensure that the persons are leading a good quality of life., persons leaving institutional care to facilitate their independent living and ensure a good quality of life and;
- *Supervised Access Visits (SAVs) and Court Services*: supervised meetings between children and the non-custodial parents/other family members when access is not possible otherwise. The service is child focused and offered in a safe environment while it facilitates communication, relationship and maintenance building among all members. Social workers strive to enhance contact with the biological parents where appropriate.

Malta successfully adopted legislation to ban corporal punishment in all settings and works towards its elimination, through various legal instruments. Furthermore, schools are obliged to ensure safe and inclusive environments for all students. The Ministry for Education and Sport strives to safeguard children from any type of violence through its policies. *The National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3years)* provide for Child Protection among their standards.

At a national level, Government promotes national strategies and programmes in order to accelerate de-institutionalisation and the transition towards quality, family-based and community-based care services, including with focus on preparing children to leave care, including for unaccompanied migrant children. Government provides residential care for children in need of care through 7 community homes which house a small number of children together in the community. Moreover, some children are placed in foster care families. When the return to biological families is not possible, a permanency plan is prepared to offer stability and security to the children by taking into consideration their wishes and best interests. Various schemes, including semi-independent living and supportive housing, support young adults leaving the care system (community/residential homes, rehabilitation centres, homeless and other youth at risk, persons suffering from mental health challenges, adults or children victims of domestic violence and persons with disability).

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

Malta supports judicial training providers and all relevant professionals' bodies to address the rights of the child and child friendly and accessible justice in their activities. The National Children's Policy puts forward the main actions of:

- i) ensuring the systematic review of legislation, policies and services that affect children;
- ii) integrated cooperation between the providers of educational, recreational, judicial, social and health services;
- iii) preventing juvenile crime and delinquency through children's basic social skills, competences and pro-social behaviour;
- iv) strengthening rehabilitation services for children with addictive behaviours;
- v) promoting a child-friendly justice system and adopt more rehabilitative and restorative approaches for juvenile offenders; and
- vi) ensuring that all child victims and perpetrators are given support.

Within this context, various initiatives are undertaken to promote improvements in the judiciary, as well as collaborative actions between relevant ministries, which broadly involves the:

- introduction and implementation of the Barnahus modality (Children's House) in Malta;
- improvement of capacity of the judiciary on matters relating to children in cases of separation;
- provision for children with better legal protection and backing in matters relating to their life (through two new collaboration systems: one between the judiciary and the social services and the other between children's advocates and social services);

- protection of minors who offend (through collaborations with international entities to guide and support Malta into the adoption of child friendly justice systems (PROMISE, NCAC).

Continuous training is provided to prosecutors on a multitude of topics – including on child friendly justice as well as on the rights of the child - both in-house as well as by foreign trainers and speakers.

In relation to the use of restorative justice and mediation in the context of civil justice, **restorative justice** measures are applicable to all inmates, including young offenders. Victim offender mediation can be applicable to young offenders, however in a criminal context not in a civil context. **Mediation** was introduced through legislative amendments in 2003, giving the parties the opportunity to reach an amicable settlement in cases of civil and commercial matters. This being said, there is no mandatory mediation within our national statutes in the context of children’s rights.

The Juvenile Court and the Probation and Parole Department provide **alternatives to imprisonment** for young offenders. Young offenders supervised and monitored by this department can be granted a probation order for a period of 1 year minimum to 3 years maximum. Added to this, Probation Officers can be appointed by the Juvenile Court to compile reports such as Pre-Sentencing Reports and Social Inquiry Reports before the delivery of the sentence. These reports may be used by the Courts in the granting of an adequate sentence to the offender as per the Probation Act.

A detailed protocol on situations of children with imprisoned parents is followed by the Correctional Services Agency, also based on the Council of Europe’s Recommendation on Children with imprisoned parents.

Malta is currently in the process of becoming a member of the European Guardianship Network, joining other Members States in order to improve our services and implement best practices. Malta has generally improved its response to application for protection of unaccompanied minors through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2021 between the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) and the Child Protection Services Directorate (CPD).

Within the context of irregular migrants disembarked in Malta, representatives will now be appointed to alleged unaccompanied minors before their age has been assessed. This ensures that alleged minors are supported and given protection during the initial stages. Representatives will also be assisting alleged unaccompanied minors in preparation for when their age is assessed; and such representatives will start being present during such assessment to support the alleged minor. With these new measures, unaccompanied minors will be further supported throughout the various stages of their accommodation within the respective centres.

With regard to the free and immediate access to birth registration, **all persons born in Malta are registered, with access to birth registration being further facilitated by dedicated offices found at the main general hospital. In addition, there was not any significant increase in capacity of front-line officials to respond to statelessness and nationality-related problems, in the context of migration.**

Malta has improved cooperation in the area of cross-border implications, to ensure the full respect of the rights of the child. The Child Protection Services Directorate (CPD) has been recognized as the national entity to perform assessments of risk of trafficking of children. This responsibility provides the CPD with official rights to participate in fora on the matter and to access networks and resources across EU. Furthermore, AMBER Alert Malta enables the Malta Police Force to quickly inform citizens when the police fear the life of an abducted or missing child is in imminent danger.

Government is also ensuring that all international and EU cooperation legislation in this context has or is being implemented into national legislation.

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

Digital connectivity, equipment, skills and services are currently steered by *the National Digital Strategy*. Various measures have been implemented to tackle the digital divide and enhance digital competences under the previous *National Digital Strategy 2014-2020* and the *National eSkills Strategy 2019-2021* which remain ongoing as part of the current Strategy. The main measures include: free Internet access in schools and dedicated Wifi access; provision of MS Office 365 and MS Teams to all primary school students; various initiatives in Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as a Data Warehouse; and continuous awareness and courses to teachers and children to harness specific digital skills (e.g. coding).

A National Strategy for Digital Education and Transversal Skills 2030 published for public consultation in November 2021 aims to support the formation of digitally literate learners and enable them to become independent, confident and discerning users of technology.

Furthermore, Malta ensures the development of children’s basic digital literacy and effective equal access to digital tools and high-speed Internet connection, digital literacy, accessible online educational material and additional educational tools for all children through the following measures:

- Year 4 to Year 6 students and educators (teachers and LSAs) are provided with a tablet. Digital education training is provided to educators.
- Online training by Heads of Department (HODs) and Support Teachers on the e-learning platform to facilitate distance learning as well as for digital pedagogy in class.
- Free Internet Vouchers (amounting to €300) to first year post-secondary students.
- The setting up of the *Access to Communication and Technology Unit (ACTU)*: A specialized unit offering speech/occupational therapy services and necessary tools to support communication by augmentative and alternative communication technologies.

Malta provides support and promotes the work of the EU co-funded Safer Internet Centres and supports child helplines and hotlines, through *BeSmartOnline!* - a project to create awareness amongst children, educators, parents/primary caregivers and other stakeholders on how to make safe use of the internet. This project also includes the *Child Web Alert Hotline*.

Children are made aware that there are diverse roles which transcend traditional gender roles as well as that true gender equity and inclusivity should also consider intersectional identities arising from such aspects as social class, ethnicity, beliefs and cultural background. Education challenges the gendered symbolic identities of academic subjects in order to promote a more diverse and balanced uptake in different fields of study and career choices which should enhance gender equity and representation in the labour market. Within this context:

- The *National Children’s Policy* continues to promote the gender balanced uptake in the choice of subjects so as to counter gender stereotyping in career prospects.
- The *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024*, amongst others, aims to reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls.
- The *National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2021–2030* provides interventions to address the gender gap in educational achievement. In particular, Objective 3 of this strategy aims to tackle the gender gap through reading for pleasure programs by four strategic actions.
- The *Early Childhood Education and Care (0–7 years): National Policy Framework for Malta and Gozo*, published in October 2021, takes into consideration:
 1. gender among its actions to provide equitable access to learning and care opportunities; and
 2. a balanced male/female presence among ECEC educators so that education and care may benefit from a mixed gender workforce.
- A support service and an educational programme entitled *Servizz Għożża* is provided to unmarried pregnant minors with the intention of leading them to adopt a positive attitude towards motherhood while empowering them to pursue their career paths.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

- Since 2021, Malta has commenced preparations to organize a Virtual Summer School on the Child Protection and the Prevention of Grave Violations against Children in Armed Conflict, a pilot project which will be held in Summer 2022. This is being done together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Children and Armed Conflict and in collaboration with the University of Malta.
- Malta regularly participates in high level meetings and conferences related to the rights of the child and children and armed conflict, also delivers national statements in support of the rights of the child including in conflict settings at the United Nations – particularly at the Human Rights Council (HRC) and at the UN General Assembly Third Committee (UNGA 3C).
- Malta is a regular co-sponsor of the HRC and UNGA 3C resolutions on the Rights of the Child.
- Malta is also an active member of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict in both New York and Geneva.

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

The robust and evidence-based national strategy on the rights of the child that Malta developed in cooperation with relevant stakeholders (including children), as well as with other relevant national strategies and plans is the *National Children’s Policy*. This *Policy* is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and is thus based on the principles of Protection, Provision and Participation. Other relevant international and EU frameworks were also considered. The *Policy* makes reference to the consultation proceedings arising from various consultation exercises throughout recent years as well as takes due cognisance of several other studies and recent statistical data.

Malta ratified both the UNCRC Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Malta signed the UNCRC Optional Protocol on a communications procedure on 18.04.2012. Malta ratified the UNCRPD Optional protocol.

Malta duly considers the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The former is evidenced in the publication of *An Interim Report (2018-2020) on the Implementation of the National Children’s Policy: From Rights to Reality*. The latter is evidenced in *Malta’s 2021–2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons: Freedom to Live*.

Malta envisages to support all actions recommended in the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child through appropriate financial resources, including EU funding. In particular, Malta is in the process of setting up the Children’s Rights Unit, a new specialised unit to coordinate the implementation of policies, strategies, measures and initiatives aimed towards fulfilling Malta’s Children’s Rights obligations.

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

Examples of Dutch policies and activities include the following:

Democracy and Youth trajectory. The cause for this policy was an analysis conducted by government commission Remkes, which was tasked on looking at a revision of the parliamentary system. They concluded that the voice of young people in Dutch democracy is under pressure. Young people are insufficiently heard and involved in (political) decision-making. This trajectory led the government to look more closely at the position of youth (organisations) in the political landscape. Princess Laurentien (director of No. 5 Foundation) was assigned with the task to strengthen several initiatives on youth participation together with young people. No.5 Foundation published a report (Bondgenoten in de Democratie: jongeren en bestuurders bouwen samen) where they stated that thinking about the involvement of young people needs to be fundamentally different (involve young people earlier in the proces, inclusive approach, equal discussion partner, giving out feedback to include it in the implementation).

The recommendations from the report have been carried out in several pilots in 2021, including tests of various forms of youth participation with 6 municipalities. In addition, research into how young people and policymakers can build better and lasting contact with each other, such making directors go to young people instead of the other way around.

On March 3rd 2022, the festival #MijnStemTelt (my vote counts) was organised in the northern city of Groningen, where the proceeds of all pilots were donated to young people and directors.

A plan to increase the involvement of young people in (political) decision-making process will be delivered to Parliament this summer. Moreover, there have been 15 discussions with political and social youth organisations and two meetings with non-affiliated young people, including one at a secondary school. Based on these results, the draft plan is drawn up in a working meeting with young people.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

For an overview of the main current policies and activities related to the second theme, we refer to the National Plan for the Child Guarantee in the Netherlands.

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

Municipalities offer youth support services for children who are victims of abuse. In support of this the national programme 'Violence does not belong anywhere' (Geweld hoort nergens thuis) invests in the multi-agency, family-centred approach, including schools and awareness-raising campaign aiming for effective prevention, early detection and completely ending child abuse. Recently, the programme has seen the launch of an initiative to train providers of mental healthcare in situations involving domestic violence and child abuse. Additionally, when it was discovered that children under a youth protection order did not always receive assistance when needed, a breakthrough approach was launched last year to ensure timely support for children receiving youth protection services. Additional national support was provided with room for local, situation-oriented tailored solutions.

The national programme has continued to give the local regions additional support this year to resume or finish their projects aiming to improve the local domestic violence and child abuse approach. To build on

the success of this national programme and improve the functioning of the Dutch youth protection system, a national programme and strategy has recently been adopted. This programme continues to invest in a multi-agency, family-centred, child and family protection approach and will work towards quality, family- and community-based care services.

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

In family and youth proceedings, minors from at least age 12 are invited to give their views during a special hearing (kindgesprek) in court. Children under the age of twelve can be invited for a hearing if they themselves indicate that they wish to be heard by the judge. In recent years, the courts have become increasingly aware of the need to provide child-friendly conditions in family law and youth law proceedings. Examples include the child-friendly notice to appear, child-friendly information and the child-friendly waiting areas and meeting rooms now available in most court buildings. Education and training for judges now also specifically devote attention to conversation techniques aimed at minors, and peer feedback and supervision procedures are in place. For example, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Security, a documentary has been developed with practical examples of how children can be heard by a judge. This documentary is used in the training of (new) judges in hearing of children. Judges are also becoming more and more aware of the need to write in plain language that children can understand.

With respect to statelessness currently there is a draft law under consideration by parliament in which children who are born stateless in the Netherlands may receive the Dutch nationality through opting in, regardless of their residence status.

In criminal proceedings, the police academy curriculum specifically highlights the position of children as suspects in two courses: Interventions in Youth Issues and Interrogating Vulnerable Persons, which also addresses the interrogation of children.

Minor offenses committed by underage suspects are settled out of court as much as possible. In the period 2015 to 2020, the proportion of minors who receive extrajudicial charges for a crime has increased, while settlements by the Public Prosecution Service and the courts have decreased. From 2015 to 2020, more than 15,300 cases involving minors have been settled yearly by the main agency for extrajudicial settlements 'Halt'. Currently, the law under which minors are referred to Halt is being reassessed, taking into account General comment number 24 and will possibly be enriched with new offences. In addition, a national pilot was launched on 1 October 2020 in which minor offenses (such as shoplifting) committed by minor first-time offenders are dealt with by the police with a verbal warning. The results of the pilot will be used to recalibrate the extrajudicial intervention palette that the Netherlands has available for minors.

Since 2019, the use of restorative justice must be considered in every criminal case involving a minor suspect. In addition, a policy framework for restorative justice provisions has been in force since 2020, in which the necessary attention is also paid to the use of restorative justice in youth cases. This has led to extra attention and effort to ensure that every link in the juvenile justice chain is geared to the provision of restorative justice.

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations developed an online code on children's rights, which became available last year. The children's rights code helps developers and designers put children's rights

first when developing digital services. The code consists of ten principles, operationalized using implementation examples. The principles are not legally enforceable in themselves, but are based on laws and regulations (such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) that are legally binding. There is also an English edition available.

The ‘Network Media literacy’ (Netwerk Mediawijsheid) is sponsored by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and promotes media literacy. It aims predominantly (but not exclusively) at children and youngsters, with a special focus on school children. Using teaching material developed by the Network, children learn about the opportunities and risks online and in traditional media.

The Dutch government transposed the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) in Dutch law. This directive promotes children’s safety online, by applying the rules of traditional media online as well.

On 1 August 2021 a new law on citizenship came into force for schools in the primary and secondary education. Schools are obliged to strengthen and enhance the understanding of and the respect for the core values on the rule of law, including European and International law. The school culture has to be in line with those core values. As a consequence students learn more about their rights and duties in society to be more familiar with the fundamentals of a democratic society and the rule of law.

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

Examples of Dutch policies and activities include the following:

During the International Year to Eliminate Child Labour (IYECL, 2021), the Netherlands has undertaken several actions to pay attention to and call to accelerate actions to eliminate child labour (in supply chains). The Netherlands became pathfinder country of the Alliance 8.7, the Dutch government launched an action pledge (supported by social partners and NGO’s) and the government organised a side event at the High level political forum on SDGs on the elimination of child labour (by connecting consuming and producing countries) and the Netherlands spoke at several international for a about the importance to eliminate child labour. Furthermore, the Netherlands funds several international programmes to eliminate child labour in supply chains; the ILO ACCEL programme which focusses on capacity building of local governments to eliminate child labour and to improve children’s rights; the Work: No Child’s Business (WNCB) programme which has an area based approach to make sure children go to school and work on (other) root causes of child labour ; and the Fund Against Child Labour which supports companies to do due diligence and set up projects to eliminate child labour in their supply chain.

A key objective of the Dutch development policy on education has been to support twelve years of inclusive, high-quality, primary and secondary public education free of charge for every child. The Netherlands continued to support children’s fundamental right to education through investing in Global Partnership for Education (EUR 150 million 2018-2025) and Education Cannot Wait (EUR 21 million 2018-2022). Education Cannot Wait specifically addresses the educational needs of children in emergencies and protracted crises, and it takes a whole-of-child approach, including protection, and mental health and psycho-social support. Thanks to the Dutch contribution to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), 3.7 million children were able to attend primary and secondary education for one whole year. Additionally, 72,712 children received individual learning materials. Dutch support to GPE and ECW financed renovation of 95 school buildings, provided 627 classrooms with new learning materials, and improved the sanitation infrastructure at 102 schools. ECW gave in-service training courses to 2,848 teachers (39% of them women) on various subjects, including mental and psychological health.

The Netherlands has a strong commitment to gender equality and empowerment of girls which is a cross-cutting theme in all of our development cooperation programs. The Netherlands contributes to the international lobby for access to education for girls by supporting, among others, the Malala Fund, the Charlevoix Declaration, and by taking part in working groups like the INEE reference group on Girls' Education in Emergencies.

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

- The Netherlands places great importance in promoting and complying with children's rights and welcomes the Commission's adoption of the EU Strategy on the rights of the child.
- Last February, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued Concluding Observations to the Netherlands.
- The Concluding Observations touch on many themes, including climate change, youth participation and education.
- Currently, the government is in the process of studying the Concluding Observations, after which the government will respond to the recommendations in due course.
- The Netherlands actively engages with civil society and other stakeholders with the aim to develop and discuss ideas and solutions to promote and incorporate the rights of the child in the Netherlands.

Thematic area 1: Participation in political and democratic life

1) Slovenia has tested the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool in 2019, it was undertaken by the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia: <https://www.irssv.si/upload2/CPAT%20REPORT%20Slovenia.pdf>

2) Currently, Slovenia participates in the CP4EUROPE project, that is coordinated by the Council of Europe and financed by the EC, DG JUST (April 2021- March 2023). The main activities that Slovenian partners will carry out in the CP4EUROPE project and deliverables are:

- strengthening the knowledge and skills of professionals working with children for their participation in decision-making processes;
- strengthening the skills of vulnerable groups of children for participation;
- national recommendations for children's participation in various processes.
- School parliament is executive body of community of pupils of school. Community of pupils of school votes representatives. School parliament is convened at least twice a year. Members of parliament forward a headmaster and school council their findings, proposals, remarks.

3) At schools, we have there are two on-going means of participation:

- School parliament as an executive body of community of pupils of school. School community votes the representatives. School parliament is convened at least twice a year. Members of the school parliament communicate with a headmaster and school council their findings, proposals, remarks.
- Child parliament is the public stand of children on theme, that pupils choose on state child parliament. He means also shape of cooperation of children in social activity and production of behaviours on human and civil rights.

Thematic area 2: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education

1) Slovenia is currently finishing the National Action Plan for implementation of the European Child Guarantee. Special working group was designed with the task to prepare the draft NAP. Also, advisory group we set up, that consists of different stakeholders – NGOs and research institutes. Children participated in this phase in the on-line workshop in which they discussed:

- who are children in need;
- what are their needs on all areas of the ECG;
- what kind of additional assistance would help children in need to prevent their social exclusion.²⁴

2) Children in Slovenia are an important priority group in several strategic documents:

National Health Care Plan 2016–2025 “Together for a society of health”

National Mental Health Programme 2018-2028

National Programme on Nutrition and Physical Activity for Health 2016–2025.

Some of the main actions to be implemented under the new European Child Guarantee will address the mental health, addictions, and obesity, as well as improve approaches in primary health care aimed at vulnerable pregnant women, children, and families with multiple health risks in the early period of family life or with multiple challenges in the perinatal period.

In the past years a network of 16 centres for mental health of children were established to address the rising trends of mental health problems in children.

Several activities took place in the area of perinatal care: assessment of needs and overview of foreign programmes, defining starting points of the programme aimed at supporting families with multiple

²⁴ Link will be added when we will adopt the final version.

challenges related to psychosocial risks at home, translation of an application for supporting pregnant women and women experiencing postnatal distress, we carried out preparation for educating perinatal mental health professionals, training of community nurses, etc.

3) Education Action Plan on integration and inclusion of 2021-2024 on field of education: the National Education Institute Slovenia published the guidelines for participation of children and adolescents under international protection to educational institutes. Guidelines include recommendations to support integration of children under international protection and recommendations on how to design inclusive educational environment so that also Slovenian children and adolescents learn to respect diversity. The guidelines are prepared for managements and experts in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools.

Thematic area 3: Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection

1) Corporal punishment of children is prohibited from 2016, when the Domestic Violence Prevention Act was amended. Corporal punishment of children is defined as any physical, cruel or degrading punishment of children or any other act with the intention to punish children containing elements of physical, psychological or sexual violence or neglect as a method of upbringing.

2) The Republic of Slovenia signed the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the procedure for reporting infringements on 28 February 2012 and adopted the Act ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure on 20 March 2018. Slovenia has prepared a Decree on the procedure for preparing the response of the Government of Slovenia to the Committee on the Rights of the Child as regards the communications procedure, which entered into force in February 2019.

3) In 2013, Slovenia ratified the CoE Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (i.e. the Lanzarote Convention), which entered into force for Slovenia on 1 January 2014. RS actively participates in the Committee of member states. It is currently involved in two parallel evaluations by the Lanzarote Committee, relating to the prevention of abuse in migratory flows and abuse through information technology.

During the Covid-19 epidemic, a 24/7 helpline was set up to help victims of violence. The TOM helpline – a telephone helpline for children and adolescents is active. In 2020, RS signed a joint agreement on the establishment of an EU telephone helpline number to help victims of violence against women.

4) Violence in educational settings:

Prevention of violence in educational settings is one of the most important parts of the school curriculum since the safe school environment and stimulative environment are the key element of the quality of schooling. Educational Institute of the Republic of Slovenia prepared the extensive document to ensure that all professionals in all educational settings contribute to the safe school environment. https://www.zrss.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/varno_in_spodbudno_ucno_okolje.pdf

In 2022 the new handbook on peer violence and bullying at schools was prepared and published with the instructions:

- how to act in cases of bullying;
- the tasks of the school advisors and experts;
- collaboration with other services and organisations.

<https://www.zrss.si/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Protokol-ob-zaznavi-in-za-obravnavo-medvrstnikega-nasilja-v-VIZ-1.pdf>

5) In Slovenia, 116 111 child helpline is established and functioning. Children can call on the helpline, they can write an e-mail and they can participate in different on-line discussions.

<https://www.e-tom.si/#>

6) In the National action plan for the ECG, it is envisaged that within the national strategy on deinstitutionalisation, child institutionalisation will be addressed as well. Goals and tasks will be identified.

Thematic area 4: Child-friendly justice

In 2021, the National Assembly unanimously passed a bill on the protection of children in criminal procedures, setting up the country's first Barnahus for children. The Children's house will provide full treatment to children involved in criminal procedures as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators (under special conditions).

Barnahus or Children's House is a special institute where children who are victims of sexual abuse or other criminal offences or have witnessed them are treated holistically. The hearing of the victim or witness is conducted in a separate room and recorded so that the child no longer has to give a number of statements to various experts. This will mitigate the child's struggles or victimisation in relevant procedures. The Children's house would also provide psycho-social and crisis support to children and perform medical examinations.

One of the important roles of the Children's house is developing and adopting programmes and carrying out the training and assessments of knowledge of professionals who assist in the interviews of children and counsellors who provide crisis and psychosocial support to children and their family members, and to ensure the uniformity and development of professional methods and procedures of the comprehensive treatment of children and developing and implementing multidisciplinary and interagency training programmes for this purpose.

In the process of implementing the Barnahus model, Slovenia collaborates closely with the Council of Europe and EU DG Reform.

In general, we can say that Slovenian Prison system pays special attention to the children of parents who are incarcerated, taking into account the Recommendation CM/Rec (2018)/5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning children with imprisoned parents. In addition to the above recommendation, we started some programs in last years:

- In the central men's prison in Dob and the women's prison in Ig, we delivered training in parenting skills, which took place in the form of educational and practical workshops on the topic of developing positive parenting.

- We have introduced lectures for newly admitted prison officers on the topic of parenthood during serving sentence. Aim of the lecture is to present the area of importance of contacts that prisoners have with their minor children during their sentences, with an emphasis on the work and role of prison officers and other prison staff. Content of the lecture is focused on the field of family relations and the experience of children when their parents is in prison.

- Especially throughout the Covid period prisoners have been able to communicate with their families and children through various technologies (such as Skype). We started this as a pilot project.

We would like to mention that we have some tools in the field of children with imprisoned parents also before the Recommendation came out:

- At all prison locations we have arranged special spaces for children who come to visit their parent.

- We have prepared a leaflet "10 questions of children of parents who are in prison", which are available in the premises for visits in prisons and in all social work centres.
- Prison staff already during the admission phase encourage the inmates who are parents to maintain contact and relationships with their children and show interest in their development.

Thematic area 5: Digital and information society

Slovenia is characterized by wide access to the Internet, so children are provided with the opportunity to express themselves and participate in the digital environment. Digital media and ICT are close to children and are the best medium for them to exercise their right and to express themselves free and to participate. Children often have not enough experience and knowledge to be able to assess the risks and consequences that entering a private (intimate) area within a digital environment. *Sexting*, *online grooming* (making contacts for sexual purposes using technology), *blackmailing* with intimate videos, *videos of child sexual abuse*, etc. are among the many ways how children are abused in the digital environment.

To achieve the best interests of the child, it is therefore necessary to balance or harmonize the child's right to protection or safety with the right to expression and participation. It is very important to present children, young people, and adults (professionals, parents, professionals) with online content that encourages the safe and creative use of technologies. Children need to be empowered to use ICT safely and creatively (development of critical thinking, etc.).

At the same time, children need to be introduced to the duties and responsibilities of certain rights (such as respect for the rights of others, hate speech...)

Although the Republic of Slovenia defines certain forms of e-abuse in the Criminal Code (acquisition of persons through ICT under the age of 15 for sexual purposes, display, possession, possession of sexual material or access to such material through ICT), prevention and education are needed, while in the same time not to forget the area of protection and assistance (when abuse has already taken place).

As the digital environment provides unlimited opportunities to improve the quality of life, enables greater levels of equality and social inclusion of children, and is a tool for empowerment and support, on the other hand, it can pose risks and increase children's vulnerability. To ensure the best protection and safety of children in the digital environment, it is necessary to raise awareness and train children, parents, guardians, and other people who use digital technology in their work with children.

Child safety in the digital environment is also one of the priority areas of the new Program for Children 2020-2025, which also addresses media and digital literacy.

Regardless of the form and type of work with children in this field, the level of children's ability to understand (according to age, level of development, etc.) must be considered. It is also important that children have a suitable medium (and way) where they can complain, report abuse, or ask for help and advice. The participation of all stakeholders - the state (all departments), civil society, non-governmental organizations, companies as well as parents and children - is very important in respecting and protecting children's rights and protecting children in the digital environment.

Slovenija provides also psychosocial support programs for addicts with digital technologies, support for excessive users, psychosocial support and victim support for online violence and early prevention for families. Support programs are integrated social protection programs for over- and/or addicted individuals and their relatives, supporting individuals with other risky online behaviours through early prevention for families.

In December 2021 the Guidelines for use of screens for children and youth were issued by the multidisciplinary group of experts with the first national recommendations regarding the usage of digital environment from mental and physical health perspective. They include information about the children's brain and mental development, recommended limitations of time spent in front of computers and other screens from early age on, as well as information for help in the case of need. Guidelines are useful for different professionals working with children and youth, for parents and children themselves.

<https://www.nijz.si/sl/smernice-za-uporabo-zaslonov-pri-otrocih-in-mladostnikih>

Thematic area 6: The Global Dimension

1) Project on human rights education for children "Our Rights" in Egypt (2021 – 2023): the project started on 1 April 2021 and will be carried out in the period mentioned in selected schools as well as some children institutions in Cairo, Alexandria and Tanta.

2) Project on human rights education for children "Our Rights" in Japan (2021): the project started in 2021 as a pilot project in several schools in city of Nagasaki. It will continue in 2022.

3) Project on human rights education for children "Our Rights" in Albania: the project started in 2020 in several schools in Tirana, where it runs since. It will continue in 2022.

4) Project on human rights education for children "Our Rights" in Kosovo: the project started in 2005 and it runs in Kosovo without interruptions since then. The financial means for its continuation have been provided for another 3 years. In 2022 the project will run in schools in cities of Peć, Istog and Klina.

5) In the course of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of EU in 2021, we specifically addressed the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, pushing very strongly for the adoption of the Council Conclusions. Unfortunately, consensus in the Council could not be reached, which was a big disappointment.

Additionally, at the informal meeting of Ministers of Justice, which took place in Slovenia in July 2021, the ministers discussed child-friendly justice and focused on the issue of the protection of children and their rights in court proceedings.

6) We have also reached an agreement in the Council and gained a positive response from the European Parliament to the accession of Bolivia and Jamaica to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Unlawful Deprivation of Children. (The adoption of the decisions of the Council of the EU made it possible to establish a legal basis for the return of unjustly transferred or detained children to their country of habitual residence through a system of cooperation between central authorities designated by the signatories to the Convention.)

Thematic area 7: Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions

1) Child participation is also one of the priority areas of the new Programme for Children 2021-2025, which we adopted in November 2020. Prior to the adoption of the Programme, together with the NGOs we co-organised a "World-caffe" with children, enabling them to express questions and concerns that they felt needed to be addressed at a systemic level. One of the goals in the Programme is that "*children fully enjoy their rights in terms of participation and opportunities for active citizenship regardless of personal and / or other circumstances*". Such participation of children promotes active citizenship and ensures involvement in decision-making later in life, higher level of social inclusion of children and a reduction in discrimination.

2) Slovenia ratified UNCRC Optional Protocols (see Thematic area 3) and UNCRPD Optional protocols (in 2008, at the same time as the UNCRPD).