

# Transnational Exchange Workshop on Child-friendly justice and Procedural rights

**Brussels**  
**13-14 May 2025**

This workshop will serve as a collaborative space to deepen understanding of how international and EU legal frameworks ensure the best interests of the child and their right to be heard in judicial proceedings. Through a combination of expert-led discussions, case studies, and practical exercises, participants will engage with key topics surrounding the child representation in legal proceedings, and other procedural safeguards that ensure children's views are meaningfully considered in judicial decisions.

- > We will explore the concept of evolving capacities and approaches to determining the child's ability to express their views in legal proceedings;
- > Discussions will include strategies to ensure that legal professionals are adequately trained in child-sensitive procedures;
- > Case studies will highlight how EU jurisdictions implement child-friendly justice in practice.

*This transnational workshop will convene experts and practitioners with extensive experience working in the field of legal proceedings and child participation, including lawyers, social workers, probation officers, intermediaries, persons providing support in proceedings to children with specific vulnerabilities, judges and prosecutors from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Malta, Austria and the Netherlands.*

*This in-person workshop, part of a three-part transnational exchange series held in Belgium, will feed into a report serving as a practical guide for child-friendly justice and procedural rights.*

## DAY 1

**9:00-9:30 COFFEE AND REGISTRATION**

**9:30-9:45 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Introduction of the project, agenda, and key themes

*Karolína Babická, Senior Legal Adviser, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)*

**9:45-11:15 THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO BE HEARD: INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS**

**9:45-10:15 The best interests of the child and Article 12 of the UNCRC**

Defining the best interests of the child and the concept of evolving capacities ensuring the right to be heard in judicial proceedings

*Karolína Babická, ICJ*

**10:15-11:15 Comparative national legal frameworks in ensuring child's participation**

Discussion on common challenges based on the baseline study findings

*Panelists:*

*Karolína Šebková, Lawyer, Forum for Human rights (FORUM)*

*Maartje Berger, Lawyer, Nederlands Juristen Comité Voor Demensenrechten (NJCM)*

*Ruth Farrugia, Lawyer and Senior Lecturer, University of Malta*

*Moderator: Laura Duchamp, Legal Researcher, ICJ*

**11:15-11:45 COFFEE BREAK**

**11:45-13:00 INVOLVEMENT OF THE CHILD IN LEGAL PROCEEDINGS**

**11:45-12:45 Rights-based approaches to child justice work in practice**

How do systemic social inequalities matter in juvenile justice practices?

*Dr Jenneke Christiaens, Professor of Criminology and Youth Penology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel*

12:45-13:30 **Children participating in different legal proceedings**  
How to ensure the child is involved and treated as a genuine party to the proceedings? Presentation of a study from France on "self-experience" of children in the proceedings  
*Martine Comte, ICJ Commissioner, Former Judge*

**13:30-14:30 LUNCH BREAK**

**14:30-17:00 THE ROLE OF THE CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE IN LEGAL PROCEEDINGS**

14:30-15:45 **The right to be heard in various modalities of child representation**  
How do various practitioners ensure the right to be heard of the child? What is their role? What are the common challenges for them in this role?

- The role of legal representatives, guardians and representatives of the child's views
- The role of social workers and psychologists in legal proceedings
- Representation in front of international bodies

➤ Recent UN CRC, and ECtHR case-law  
➤ Case examples: *B.J. and P.J. v. the Czech Republic* and *Blokhin v. Russia*, ECtHR  
➤ Case example: *ICJ v the Czech Republic*, ECSR

15:45-16:15 **COFFEE BREAK**

16:15-17:00 **Discussion on best practices**

How to ensure that children's views are meaningfully considered?

*Panelists:*

*Nuala Mole, Senior Lawyer, Founder of the Advice on Individual Rights in Europe (AIRE) Center*

*Karolína Šebková, FORUM*

*Karolína Babická, ICJ*

*Moderator: Maartje Berger, NJCM*

**19:00 DINER**

## DAY 2

**9:30-13:00 ENSURING CHILD-FRIENDLY JUSTICE AND REMEDIES FOR CHILDREN**

9:30-11:00 **Breakout sessions by country**  
Discussion on national challenges and available child-friendly procedures to ensure the right to be heard

- Are courtroom settings and legal procedures adapted?
- Are there (compulsory) training courses and support for legal professionals?
- What national remedies are available to uphold the child's right to appeal, and how accessible are they?

11:00-11:30 **COFFEE BREAK**

11:30-12:45 **Reporting back and discussion on national practices**

*Feedback and comments by:*

*Nuala Mole, AIRE Center*

*Martine Comte, ICJ*

12:45-13:00 **Closing**

*ICJ*

*Moderator: Laura Duchamp, Legal Researcher, ICJ*

**13:00 LUNCH**



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