

Transnational Exchange Roundtable

Access to Justice for Children Accused and Suspect in Criminal Proceedings
ACCESS project

Brussels

18-19 March 2025

The exchange roundtable brings together justice professionals from different professional groups – lawyers, judges, prosecutors, law enforcement professionals, social workers and parole officers – for an exchange of good practices and challenges faced by children in criminal proceedings, in light of EU Directive 2016/800 on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings.

The specific focus of the roundtable will be on equality in proceedings, possible discrimination, and the disproportionate impact of criminal proceedings on children belonging to different minority groups, including, for instance, children with disabilities, Roma children, children with a migration background, and LGBTI+ children. The question of children below the age of criminal responsibility in the target countries and especially their access to procedural safeguards will be discussed. The focus topics of the roundtable have been selected following a baseline study, carried out in the project countries at the beginning of the project, analysing challenges and good practices related to the implementation of Directive 2016/800 and children's access to justice in criminal proceedings.

Day 1 of the roundtable focuses on cross-professional networking and discussion on cross-cutting issues, with the involvement of keynote speakers. During day 2 participants are divided into separate workshops per professional group (1: lawyers, 2: judges, 3: prosecutors and law enforcement personnel, 4: social workers and probation officers), and by national groups to discuss specific issues relevant to their professional focus area, and country of origin.

The **Access to Justice for Children Accused and Suspect in Criminal Proceedings (ACCESS) project** aims to foster EU-wide effective and non-discriminatory access to justice for children in criminal proceedings, and respect for children's procedural rights amongst legal and other professionals. The project aims to foster the effective application of Directive 2016/800 by addressing the gaps identified in access to procedural rights through peer exchange among justice professionals from six EU countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Poland, and Slovakia). These will become ambassadors of change in follow-up national seminars, where further stakeholders will be involved.

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AGENDA

DAY 1

9:30-09:45	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS Introduction of the project, agenda, and key themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Karolína Babická, Senior Legal Adviser, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ-EI)</i> - <i>Mikiko Otani, ICJ Commissioner, former Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child</i> 	
9:45-11:00	OVERVIEW OF DIRECTIVE 2016/800 AND THE IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES IN PROJECT COUNTRIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Overview of children's rights under Directive 2016/800</i> • <i>Overview of the situation in the project countries and challenges identified in the ACCESS project baseline study</i> • <i>Discussion</i> <i>ICJ & partners</i>	
11:00-13:00	CHILDREN AS RIGHTS HOLDERS IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS	
	11:00-11:45	Rights-based vs. care or enforcement-based approaches to juvenile justice <i>Speaker: Mikiko Otani, ICJ Commissioner, former Chair of the UN CRC</i>
11:45-12:00	COFFEE BREAK	
	12:00-13:00	Roundtable: Rights-based approaches to juvenile justice work in practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How to centre child rights in the juvenile justice process and justice actors' work with children?</i> • <i>What practical tools and approaches can be adopted to ensure children are treated as rights-holders and active participants in the process?</i> <i>Speakers:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Mikiko Otani, ICJ Commissioner, former Chair of the UN CRC</i> - <i>Jenneke Christiaens, Professor of Criminology and Youth Penology at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel</i>

		<i>Moderator: Eva Huls, Lawyer, DCI-NL, Judge at the regional courts of Rotterdam and Amsterdam</i>
13:00-14:00	LUNCH BREAK	
14:00-17:00	CHILDREN AT PARTICULAR RISK: Ensuring equal access to rights and protection	
	14:00-14:45	<p>Roundtable: Children with disabilities in criminal proceedings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on how to ensure equal access to rights for children with disabilities in criminal proceedings • Different approaches to disability and their impact on how individual rights are addressed within the criminal justice system <p><i>Speaker: Dainius Pūras, Former CRC member & UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Karolína Babická, Senior Legal Adviser, ICJ-EI</i></p>
	14:45-15:30	<p>Roundtable: How systemic inequalities affect vulnerable children in criminal proceedings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on how systemic inequalities and the lack of focus on children's rights in juvenile justice systems impact vulnerable children, particularly those at social risk • Exploration of practical approaches to voicing the experiences of youth and addressing these inequalities in criminal justice practices <p><i>Speaker: Jenneke Christiaens, Professor of Criminology and Youth Penology at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Viktoriya Konashava, ICJ-EI, Legal Researcher</i></p>
15:30-16:00	COFFEE BREAK	
	16:00-17:00	<p>Roundtable: Access to justice for children excluded from criminal proceedings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the rights and access to justice for children not subject to juvenile justice proceedings (e.g., children below the age of criminal responsibility, children with psychosocial disabilities) who are still affected by

		<p>sanctions such as institutionalization and deprivation of liberty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining the relationship between the right to health and the deprivation of liberty in such cases <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mikiko Otani, ICJ Commissioner, former Chair of the UN CRC Dainius Pūras, Former CRC member & UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health <p>Moderator: Karolína Babická, Senior Legal Adviser, ICJ-EI</p>
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DAY 2

9:30-10:45	BREAKOUT SESSIONS: four professional groups	
	09:30-10:15	<p>Discussion on the topics of the previous day and the role of the respective professional groups in ensuring access to justice and children's rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children as rights-holders Children belonging to marginalized groups and non-discrimination The rights of children excluded from juvenile justice proceedings <p>Moderators: ICJ, FORUM</p>
	10:15-10:45	Reporting back to plenary
10:45-11:15	COFFEE BREAK	
11:15-12:30	BREAKOUT SESSIONS: national challenges and good practices	
	11:15-12:00	Breakout Sessions by Country
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on national challenges on access to justice for children in criminal proceedings Identifying strategic entry points for adopting good practices and responding to challenges <p>Moderators: ICJ, Partners</p>
	12:00-12:30	Reporting back to plenary
12:30-13:00	AMBASSADORS OF CHANGE – Next steps and support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on the ambassadors of change role – expectations, goals and support mechanisms going forward 	
13:00	CLOSING AND LUNCH	

This in-person roundtable, kicking off the project activities of the ACCESS project, lays the foundation for multidisciplinary professional discussions and exchange of experiences. The roundtable will be followed up by four online workshops by professional category and by national workshops continuing the discussion on access to justice in criminal proceedings where they are suspects or accused.



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