

Children in Criminal Proceedings

Access to justice for children accused and suspect in criminal proceedings
ACCESS project

Brussels, European Parliament,

15:00 – 18:00, 23 June 2026

The [ACCESS project](#) final event will bring together justice professionals, policymakers, civil society representatives and project partners to reflect on the implementation of procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings across the European Union (EU). The discussion will focus on key procedural rights established under Directive (EU) 2016/800 on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings, including the right to a lawyer, the right to information, the requirement to conduct an individual assessment, and safeguards related to deprivation of liberty.

The discussion will also address gaps in implementation identified during the project in relation to the implementation of procedural safeguards and the functioning of child justice systems in Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Poland, and Slovakia. Particular attention will be given to inequalities within justice systems and to the disproportionate impact that legal proceedings may have on certain groups of children. The event will also explore structural barriers that may limit children's effective access to procedural safeguards in different EU Member States.

Participants will hear examples of promising practices presented by national practitioners, including approaches to professional specialization, interdisciplinary cooperation and alternatives to detention. The event will conclude with the presentation of the main outcomes of the ACCESS project, including the final report (*Safeguarding the rights of child suspects and accused in criminal proceedings: Compendium of Good practices*) and a set of frequently asked questions designed to support children in understanding their rights in criminal proceedings.

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 (EU) 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).

AGENDA

15:00 – 15:15	<p>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</p> <p>Introduction of the project, agenda, and key themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>MEP Hristo Petrov (Renew, Bulgaria)</i> - <i>MEP Saskia Bricmont (Greens/EFA, Belgium)</i> - <i>Karolína Babická, Senior Legal Adviser, ICJ</i>
15:15 – 15:45	<p>INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN STANDARDS ON CHILDREN IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Key procedural safeguards established under Directive (EU) 2016/800</i> • <i>Overview of children's rights under international and regional legal standards</i> <p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Laura Stelzer, DG JUST, European Commission</i> - <i>Benoit Van Keirsbilck, Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child</i>
15:45 – 16:45	<p>GAPS AND GOOD PRACTICES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR CHILDREN</p> <p>Gaps in Implementation Identified in the ACCESS Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Presentation of findings from baseline studies conducted in participating countries</i> • <i>Gaps identified during project activities and exchanges among justice professionals</i> • <i>Existing systemic inequalities leading to unequal access to justice</i> <p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Benoit Van Keirsbilck, DCI-BE</i> - <i>Radina Kovacheva, BHC</i> - <i>Karolína Šebková, FORUM</i> - <i>Maartje Berger, NJCM</i> - <i>Marcin Wolny, HFHR</i> <p><i>Moderator: Eva Huls, Strategic Adviser to the Dutch Children's Ombudsperson</i></p> <p>Discussion</p>
16:45 – 17:00	<p>COFFEE BREAK</p>
17:00 – 17:30	<p>Good Practices in Project Countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Specialization of lawyers representing children in criminal proceedings (Belgium and the Netherlands)</i> • <i>Interdisciplinary trainings and professional peer exchange and supervision practices (Belgium and the Netherlands)</i> • <i>Alternatives to detention for children</i> <p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The Netherlands: Coosje Peterse (Hof-Recht Advocaten) and Floor Huizinga (Dutch Child Protection Council)</i> - <i>Belgium: Eric Van der Mussele (Antwerp Bar; Commission Youth of the Flemish Bar Association)</i> <p><i>Moderator: Eva Huls, Strategic Adviser to the Dutch Children's Ombudsperson</i></p> <p>Discussion</p>
17:30– 17:55	<p>PRESENTATION OF PROJECT OUTCOMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Presentation of the Compendium of Good Practices developed within the project</i> • <i>Presentation of the FAQs for Children in Criminal Proceedings</i> • <i>Reflections on the future use of project results and dissemination activities</i> <p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Viktorija Konashava, ICJ</i> - <i>Maartje Berger, NJCM</i> - <i>Benoit Van Keirsbilck, DEI-BE</i> - <i>Marcin Wolny, HFHR</i>
17:55– 18:00	<p>CLOSING REMARKS</p>