



Strasbourg, 27 October 2014

DECS-ENF (2014) 2

**Committee of Experts on the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child
(DECS - ENF)
1st meeting**

INFORMATION DOCUMENT AND DRAFT WORK PLAN

The Committee of Experts on the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (DECS-ENF) was set up by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in order to strengthen the involvement of member States in assessing the implementation of the current Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2012-2015) and developing the next Strategy for the period 2016-2019. This document puts the mandate of the DECS-ENF into the context of the work undertaken so far by the Programme “Building a Europe for and with Children” and proposes a work plan for the fulfillment of the Committee’s mandate by end 2015.

The Programme “Building a Europe for and with Children”

The Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (2005) mandated the Organisation to mainstream children’s rights into all its policies, co-ordinate all child-related activities and eradicate all forms of violence against children. In response, the Council of Europe launched the transversal Programme “Building a Europe for and with children”. Since the launch of this Programme in Monaco in 2006, the Council of Europe has been mainstreaming children’s rights into virtually all its policy areas and developed a holistic child rights-based approach that is complementary to the United Nations agenda. Thematically, the Programme has a strong focus on the protection of children from violence in all its forms, but also addresses a wide range of other issues.

The Programme “Building a Europe for and with Children” has gone through three policy cycles so far. During the first cycle (2006-2008), the Programme focused on developing transversal working methods and partnerships, on increasing visibility of Council of Europe standards and on identifying needs for new standards and tools to fill the gaps. Many child- and user-friendly materials have been and are still being developed to increase the positive impact of Council of Europe work on children in Europe. The anti-corporal punishment campaign “Raise your Hand against Smacking” helped to raise awareness and bring about legislative change in many member States.

During the second cycle and guided by the Stockholm Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2009-2011), a range of new recommendations and policy guidelines were prepared – some of them with the support of children themselves – and adopted by the Committee of Ministers. They cover the areas of protection from violence through integrated strategies, child-friendly justice, health and social services, children with disabilities as well as child and youth participation. Since the entry into force of

the Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) in 2010 and the launching of the ONE in FIVE campaign to stop sexual violence against children in the same year, action against this particular form of violence against children is high on the agenda of the Council of Europe's action on children's rights.

Under the current Strategy (2012-2015), the focus shifted from the development of new legal standards to their actual promotion, monitoring and implementation. To promote existing standards, valuable partnerships have been created such as with the European Commission and the European Agency on Fundamental Rights (FRA) in the field of child-friendly justice. Monitoring and evaluation of standards is being addressed through a more systematic focus on children within various Council of Europe monitoring bodies. To support requesting member States in implementing children's rights standards, the Council of Europe started to work on co-operation projects funded by external sources.

Working methods

The Council of Europe Network of National Coordinators on the Rights of the Child provides the link between the Secretariat and member States via national focal points, who are key interlocutors working transversally on children's rights at national level. In promoting children's rights, the Council of Europe also co-operates intensely non-governmental organisations as well as with other international organisations, notably the European Union, UNICEF, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Among the different bodies of the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights and many steering and expert Committees and monitoring bodies are active in promoting and protecting children's rights in their daily work. At Secretariat level, an Inter-Secretariat Task Force on the Rights of the Child meets regularly to exchange and co-ordinate action within the organisation. The work is facilitated by Children's Rights Division in the Directorate General of Democracy.

The Terms of Reference of the DECS-ENF

The Committee of Experts on the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child is a subordinate body to the European Committee for Social Cohesion, Human Dignity and Equality (CDDECS). The Committee is entrusted by the Committee of Ministers with the preparation of a report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012-2015 and the preparation of a draft Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child for 2016-2019. In doing so, the Committee is expected to build on the experience of the Council of Europe Network of National Coordinators on the Rights of the Child and to conduct a consultation with member States, international organisations, experts and NGOs with a view of fostering synergies and complementarity.

The Committee's expected results are:

1. Take stock of the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012-2015;
2. Undertake consultation to assess needs and opportunities in the field of children's rights and advise on action to be taken by the Council of Europe in this area
3. Agree on a draft Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2019 to be presented to the Committee of Ministers for adoption by 31 December 2015

Proposed work plan and timetable

With a view to the Committee fulfilling its expected results as stated by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Secretariat proposes the following work plan to be discussed and **decided upon** at the first meeting of the DECS-ENF.

The DECS-ENF will hold three meetings in total. The second meeting will be held in the week of 13 April 2015 in Strasbourg, the third meeting in October or November 2015, possibly in Geneva together with the Network of National Coordinators on Children's Rights. Members of the Committee will be expected to provide strategic direction and comments on documents per email between the meetings. Depending on the working methods the Committee agrees on, decisions can also be taken ad referendum between meetings. The Terms of Reference of the DECS-ENF will end on 31 December 2015.

Expected result 1:

Take stock of the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012-2015

The Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2012-2015 focuses on bringing the standards that were developed during previous strategy cycles closer to children's realities. To this end, partnerships with external stakeholders as well as a more systematic monitoring and evaluation of Council of Europe standards in the field of children's rights have been high on the agenda. Also, the Organisation started to embark on co-operation projects on children's rights with member States requesting so.

Thematically, the current strategy focuses on four main objectives:

- promoting child-friendly services and systems (in the areas of justice, health and social services, family law and policies, education, sports, culture and other recreational and youth activities);
- eliminating all forms of violence against children (including sexual violence, trafficking in children, corporal punishment, gender-based and domestic violence and violence in schools and pre-schools);
- guaranteeing the rights of children in vulnerable situations (such as children in alternative care, with disabilities, in detention, migrant and Roma children)
- promoting child participation (through promotion of the right to be heard, democratic citizenship and human rights education, education and information on children's rights, and protecting and empowering children in the media environment).

1 st meeting	Exchange of views on meaningful ways to report to the Committee of Ministers on the implementation of the current Strategy. Exchange of views on a draft questionnaire for member States on the implementation of the Strategy prepared by the Secretariat and decision a) on a final text or b) to have it revised and approved by email
December 2014	(Revised) questionnaire on progress sent out to member States
February 2015	Deadline for submission of replies to questionnaire
2 nd meeting	Discussion of draft report prepared by the Secretariat based on the replies by member States and other data
June 2015	Exchange of views on draft report between Chair of DECS-ENF and CDDECS Plenary
3rd meeting	Approval of revised and updated report and submission to the CDDECS and the Committee of Ministers

Expected result 2:

Undertake consultation to assess needs and opportunities in the field of children's rights and advise on action to be taken by the Council of Europe in this area

The next Strategy on the Rights of the Child shall be based on input from different kinds of stakeholders. The DECS-ENF is entrusted to guide the Secretariat in obtaining the views of member States, Council of Europe bodies, civil society, other international organisations and children throughout the process leading up to the new Strategy.

In the last Strategy development process, a draft text was prepared by the Secretariat and then opened up for comments to the Network of National Coordinators on Children's rights, Council of Europe bodies, international organisations and NGOs. Through the creation of the DECS-ENF, member States will have a stronger role vis-à-vis the Secretariat as well as vis-à-vis other stakeholders in guiding both the development process and the content of the next Strategy.

Children's views on the topics to be included in the current Strategy were obtained through an in-depth secondary study of the results of consultations of children carried out by the Council of Europe and many other organisations. The DECS-ENF is invited to decide whether this approach should be followed again and/or if a more direct participation of children in the development of the Strategy – e.g. on one particular topic – should be envisaged.

Proposed actions:

1 st meeting	Exchange of views on meaningful ways to consult different groups of stakeholders on the next Strategy and decision on a timetable.
	Exchange of views on draft questionnaires prepared by the Secretariat for different stakeholders and decision on a) a final text or b) to have it revised and approved by email
	Exchange of views and decision on a way to obtain children's views in the Strategy development process
December 2014	(Revised) questionnaire sent out to member States and other stakeholders
February 2015	Deadline for submission of replies to questionnaire
Before or after 2 nd meeting?	Report on children's views and/or direct consultation with children
2 nd meeting, April 2015	Discussion of draft Strategy prepared by the Secretariat and based on the replies by stakeholders
During and after Strategy development process	Feedback to children, if a direct consultation was held

Expected result 3:

Agree on a draft Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2019 to be presented to the Committee of Ministers for adoption by 31 December 2015

The Mid-term Review Conference on the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (Dubrovnik, 27-28 March 2014) provided a first opportunity for member States and other stakeholders to assess the implementation of the current strategy and identify issues that the Council of Europe should focus on under its next strategy. The wish was expressed that the Council of Europe place stronger focus on three particularly compelling issues: firstly, the consequences of the economic crisis on children, secondly, the risks and opportunities of children's use of new information and communication technologies and thirdly, the "hyper or over-sexualisation" of today's society and the impact it may have on children and their rights.

Prior to the Mid-term review conference in Dubrovnik, an informal survey was conducted to consult the member States (through the Network of National Coordinators for Children's Rights) and identify issues that governments would like the Council of Europe to address as a matter of priority for the coming years. The responses from the survey show that Internet and media related issues as well as the impact of the economic crisis and children's rights in the family environment are of major importance for member States.

Alongside these "new" areas on which the Council of Europe could place more emphasis, it was also underlined both at the Dubrovnik Conference and in the survey that the work being done within the objectives of the current Strategy (see above) continues to be of high relevance to member States. Despite the progress achieved in many areas, the feedback so far seems to indicate that the current objectives will still be relevant during the coming years and that a next Strategy should to a large extent build on existing work.

Proposed actions:

1 st meeting	Brainstorming on national and European priorities for 2016 and beyond and decision on main “pillars” of the next Strategy
Dec 2014 – Febr 2015	Consultation of stakeholders (see above)
2 nd meeting, April 2015	Discussion of draft Strategy prepared by the Secretariat and based on consultation with stakeholders
June 2015	Exchange of views on draft Strategy between DECS-ENF Chair and CDDECS Plenary
3rd meeting, autumn 2015	Exchange on and approval of (revised) draft Strategy and submission to CDDECS
2-4 Dec 2015	Approval of draft Strategy by CDDECS Plenary and submission to Committee of Ministers
Dec 2015/Jan 2016	Adoption of Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child by the Committee of Ministers
1 st semester 2015	Launching of the new Strategy at a High-Level Conference