

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT COORDINATOR ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

**Annual Report 2025 and Work Programme 2026 of the EP
Coordinator on Children's Rights**

**Mrs Ewa Kopacz
Vice-President of the European Parliament**

**Summary of the EP Coordinator's on Children's Rights work in 2025
within the statutory activities - main initiatives**

Act as a central contact point to monitor and actively promote children's rights in EU policies, ensuring coherence and visibility of Parliament's actions in this area

- ✓ Mainstreaming children's voices in the European Parliament's work
- ✓ Focusing on physical & mental health of children
- ✓ Focusing on child online safety
- ✓ Promoting family based alternative care for children
- ✓ Protecting rights of children in armed conflicts
- ✓ Marking the World Children's Day

Act in the field of international child abduction, cross-border family issues and child friendly justice

- ✓ Marking 45th anniversary of signing the 1980 Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of the International Child Abduction
- ✓ Participating in events and conferences on cross-border family disputes
- ✓ Promoting child-friendly justice
- ✓ Promoting cross-border mediation and informing individual enquirers on the possible use of mediation in their particular cases

Be a central information point for citizens of the Member States in international parental child abduction or other cross-border family disputes

- ✓ Dealt with almost 60 enquires coming from the citizens concerning cross-border and domestic child related issues, including interventions at the diplomatic level
- ✓ Addressed the systematic breaches of EU and international rules concerning cross-border family matters

Background

The obligation to protect and promote children's rights is enshrined in Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which all Member States ratified. Published in March 2021, the [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#) presents a detailed and comprehensive roadmap for steps to take in six areas at both Union and Member State level to protect and promote children's rights across the European Union and beyond. Those pillars are: child participation, socio-economic inclusion, health and education, combating violence against children, child-friendly justice, digital and information society and global dimension.

The [European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights](#) (the EP Coordinator) mandate was established by a decision of the EP Bureau in 2018 to enable the Parliament to have a comprehensive and coordinated approach on issues affecting children through the creation of a central point of contact both within Parliament and externally on Parliament's work on children's rights. The position itself evolved from the European Parliament Mediator for International Child Abduction¹. In line with the competences granted by the EP Bureau decision, the EP Coordinator serves as well as a central contact point for citizens on parental child abduction and other cross-border family matters and promotes family mediation, thereby keeping the link with its historical mandate and the particular relations with the Committee on Legal Affairs.

On 20 November 2023, the EP Bureau endorsed the recommendations presented by Ewa Kopacz, then Vice-President and EP Coordinator on Children's Rights. The revised mandate aimed to strengthen the role, competence and visibility of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights and the Office to support Parliament's commitment and obligations to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child for the next legislative period 2024-2029².

In July 2024, after her re-election as the Member of the European Parliament and, subsequently, as a Vice-President, Ms Ewa Kopacz was requested by President Roberta Metsola to continue her activities in the role of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights until the mid-term.

Following the established practice and the requirements of its mandate, the EP Coordinator presented her annual report 2025 and the work programme for 2026 to the Committee on Legal Affairs on [24 March 2026].

This report presents a summary of the main activities and achievements of 2025 and the work programme for 2026, and it is organised into three parts that reflect the main responsibilities within the EP Coordinator's mandate.

¹ Historically, the position of Coordinator was named "European Parliament Mediator for international parental child abduction" since its creation in 1987 on the initiative of Lord Plumb, the then President of the European Parliament.

² Please consult the EP Coordinator webpage and the Annual Report 2023 for detailed information on the recommendations endorsed by the EP Bureau in 2023.

Heading I. Coordination of the EP activities in the field of children’s rights.

Heading II. International child abduction and other cross-border family disputes.

Heading III. Mainstreaming children’s voices in the Parliament on specific issues related to children’s rights.

I. Coordination of the EP activities in the field of children’s rights

2025 activities summary

2025 was a first full calendar year of the 10th parliamentary term. Based on its mandate and competences enshrined in it, the EP Coordinator and her Office continued to act as a central contact point to monitor and actively promote children’s rights in EU policies, ensuring coherence and visibility of Parliament’s actions in this area. Following a well-established framework for cooperation within the Parliament, with other EU institutions and international organisations and stakeholders active in the field of children’s rights, the EP Coordinator engaged in work on cross-border family law issues, online safety and physical and mental health of children and young people and protection of rights of vulnerable groups of children within and beyond European Union. This part of the annual report presents a summary of this collaboration showing the diversity of partners and networks, as well as formats and platforms used to mainstream children’s voices and share reliable information and research on the needs and challenges children and young people currently face. All those activities focused as well on sharing best practices and possible policy solutions.

Cooperation with parliamentary committees

In 2025, the EP Coordinator continued to engage directly with some of the key committees with competences in different areas of children’s rights. To support and expand this cooperation, the Office of the EP Coordinator develops and maintains working relationships with the secretariats of relevant parliamentary committees, sharing knowledge and liaising with experts, academics, international organisations and stakeholders active in the field of children’s rights, if requested. The restructuring of the Directorate-General for Internal Policies and establishment of four new Directorates-Generals³ dealing with legislative work did not impact the well-established cooperation between the EP Coordinator and her Office and relevant committees’ secretariats. The unique Office’s position as a part of the Secretariat of the Committee on Legal Affairs is particularly beneficial and appreciated in view of the successful

³ The Office of the EP Coordinator on Children’s Rights remains a part of the Secretariat of the Committee on Legal Affairs, and from 16 January 2025 is placed in Directorate-General for Citizen’s Rights, Justice and Institutional Affairs (DG IUST) in Directorate for Justice, Civil Liberties and Institutional Affairs.

cooperation not only with the parliamentary committees but with other bodies and services of the Parliament's as well.

Cooperation with Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI, DG IUST)

The EP Coordinator and the Office maintain their special, close relationship and ongoing cooperation with the Committee on Legal Affairs regarding the committee's legislative competences in the field of family law, including cross-border parental child abduction and custody procedures, mediation and alternative dispute resolution in family matters. In 2025, the Office of the EP Coordinator continued to work closely with the Committee on these topics and stayed continuously at the disposal of the Committee to collaborate with and support its Secretariat on issues related to children's rights, mediation and cross-border family law.

To mark the 45th anniversary of the signing of the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction in 2025, the EP Coordinator collaborated with the Committee on Legal Affairs to organise a workshop⁴ with experts to highlight the success and importance of the Convention, address some ongoing issues with its implementation and examine its influence on the European rules related to cross-border family disputes. Additionally, the role of mediation was discussed as a faster, more cost-effective, and child-friendly method to solve cross-border family conflicts.

The EMPL/JURI joint hearing on the promotion and protection of the rights of children placed in alternative care

Following the EP Coordinator's request, the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment agreed to organise a joint public hearing⁵ to discuss a wide range of issues related to the protection and promotion of the rights of children placed in alternative care in the European Union. The hearing, that took place on 18 March 2025, was inspired by the European Network of Young Advisors (ENYA)⁶ [recommendations on protection and promotion of the rights of children in alternative care](#) and the [European Commission's recommendations on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interest of the child](#). In her introductory remarks, the EP Coordinator underlined that children placed in alternative care across Europe face many similar challenges, often do not feel heard, and frequently lack hope for a better future. She stressed that actions of and cooperation between the justice and social care systems must always be in the best interests of the child. In presence of Commissioner Glenn Micallef, experts provided information on preventive measures against family separation, the state of play on deinstitutionalisation and the quality of foster care in Member States. They also offered an insight into safeguarding the best interests of the child in care proceedings and explained the cross-border placement procedure under the Brussels IIb Regulation. In addition, the

⁴ For more information on the JURI workshop please consult the part II of this annual report.

⁵ For more information on the public hearing please see Annex I and consult [here](#).

⁶ ENYA is a young people participatory project launched under the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children.

Committees' attention was drawn to the challenges that young people face when leaving care and starting independent life.

Cooperation with the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL, DG CASP)

Over the past years, cooperation between the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights has developed significantly and yielded concrete results. Apart from taking action on organising a joint EMPL/JURI hearing on protection of children's rights in foster and institutional care (as described above), the EP Coordinator initiated and participated in an exchange of views on the situation of young carers in Europe⁷ held on 18 March 2025 during the meeting of the EMPL Committee. Drawing from the [in-depth analysis published in February 2024](#), Members of the European Parliament and experts discussed the needs and challenges faced by children and young people who take on caring responsibilities for ill or disabled family members. They acknowledged the urgent need to improve the procedures to identify young carers, at the national and European level, enabling them access to early support services. This exchange also highlighted the impact that caring duties have on the mental and physical health, education, and general wellbeing of this extraordinary group of children and adolescents.

On 23 June 2025, the EP Coordinator was invited to take the floor during the constitutive meeting of the [EMPL Working Group on the European Child Guarantee](#) (ECG) that re-established its activities in the 10th legislative term. The first meeting served to reaffirm the Parliament's commitment to eradicating child poverty and social exclusion, while focusing on the critical function of parliamentary oversight in ensuring the effective implementation of the Child Guarantee and the broader social inclusion of vulnerable children across Member States. The second meeting of the Working Group took place on 15 October 2025 and focused on the upcoming review of the ECG with the Commission presenting the progress on this process and relevant NGO's sharing their overview of several successful projects conveyed under Member States' ECG National Action Plans. It is established that the Office of the EP Coordinator is invited and participates as an observer in the meetings of the Working Group, in its public parts.

Cooperation with the Committee on Petitions (PETI, DG IUST)

The EP Coordinator and her Office continued their established day-to-day cooperation with the Committee on Petitions. On a regular basis, where relevant, the PETI Committee refers petitions concerning children's rights to the EP Coordinator and her Office. In 2025, three such petitions were referred to the Office for information.

Furthermore, the EP Coordinator, when responding to individual enquiries received directly by her Office, and following the assessment of their content, may suggest that the citizen makes use of the petition mechanism in order to address a particular issue.

⁷ For more information on the EMPL exchange of views please consult Annex II

On 4 November 2025, at the invitation of the Chair of the Committee on Petitions, the EP Coordinator delivered opening remarks at the public hearing on *Protecting children and adolescents in digital environments: challenges and policy solutions*⁸, organised jointly by the Committee on Petitions and the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection. The hearing examined the current landscape, key challenges and policy solutions on protecting children and adolescents in digital environment, taking into account several petitions submitted to the PETI Committee on the topic. It also built upon the work done in the IMCO Committee in this area, including on the [own-initiative report on the protection of minors online \(2025/2060\(INI\)\)](#), and the [Guidelines on the measures to ensure a high level of privacy, and security for minors online](#) published by the European Commission on 10 October 2025. In her opening remarks, the EP Coordinator stressed that tech companies must stop prioritising engagement at the expense of children's and adolescents' safety, embedding protection into the very core of their digital service design. She also highlighted that digital safety requires comprehensive education - teaching children and adults to recognize threats, respond to risks, and develop responsible online habits.

Cooperation with the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI, DG EXPO)

On the occasion of the World's Children Day, the Subcommittee on Human Rights invited the EP Coordinator to participate in the exchange of views, organised in association with the Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee, on the situation of Ukrainian children forcibly transferred and deported by Russia⁹. The panel of experts including the Ukrainian Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and an expert from Yale School of Public Health's Humanitarian Research Lab, presented the most recent data concerning deported children and discussed the most effective ways of cooperation to find them and bring them back to Ukraine. The EP Coordinator recalled that the Parliament's position on Ukrainian children has been clear since the outset of Russia's aggression: unequivocally condemning the killings, forced displacement, deportation, and illegal adoption of children, as well as their russification and militarization, which aim to eradicate Ukrainian identity. She re-emphasized that the return of Ukrainian children illegally deported to Russia and Belarus must be immediate, unconditional, and non-negotiable and those responsible for this systemic crime must be brought to justice.

The Office of the EP Coordinator maintains close cooperation with the Secretariat of the Subcommittee on Human Rights through information exchanges and stakeholder meetings focused on children's rights.

Additionally, the Office of the EP Coordinator remains in contact with other relevant units in DG EXPO that are responsible for topics related to Ukrainian children illegally deported to Russia, especially with the Secretariat of the Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee.

⁸ For more information on the public hearing please consult Annex III and [here](#).

⁹ To watch the exchange please go [here](#).

Cooperation with the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety (ENVI, DG ECTI)

In light of the public hearing, organised on 3 December 2025 by the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety, on the *Food safety risks linked to energy drink consumption in minors*¹⁰, the EP Coordinator reached out to the Chairs of the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety and of the Committee on Public Health, to draw their attention to the latest [ENYA recommendations on the children's right to physical health](#). Subsequently, invited to take the floor at the hearing, the EP Coordinator agreed with experts on the health risks posed by stimulants, caffeine and sugars contained in energy drinks, further arguing that the EU must adopt a systemic approach to children's health and wellbeing, including on the access to healthy and affordable nutrition. During the event, the Members and experts' call to action focused on two pillars: possible age limit on access to energy drinks and regulation of marketing strategies used towards children and young people by the energy drinks producers.

Cooperation with Members of the European Parliament

Protection and promotion of children's rights is very high on the agenda of individual Members, political groups and informal groups of Members gathered in intergroups. Over the last year, the EP Coordinator engaged in many activities, exchanges and events that focused on specific issues related to mental and physical health, safety online and children's wellbeing¹¹. The EP Coordinator and her Office stays at interested Members' disposal in view of sharing the knowledge, research and information in the field of children's rights.

Cooperation with and support within the Parliament's administration

The EP Coordinator and her Office continued to increase communication and cooperation within the Parliament's administration, as enshrined in the recommendations endorsed by the EP Bureau in 2023, in order to assist the Parliament's services on specific topics and issues related to child rights and also to support the Parliament in fulfilling its commitment and obligations to promote and protect the rights of the child. In this regard, the Office has strengthened, expanded and, in some cases, initiated cooperation with:

- *The President's Cabinet*

The EP Coordinator and her Office maintain continuous and direct liaison with the President's Cabinet through a designated Cabinet member. The Office provides specialised support to the Cabinet on enquiries regarding cross-border family law and other child rights related matters. This collaboration includes engaging with stakeholders on behalf of the President and

¹⁰ For more information please consult [here](#).

¹¹ Please see part III of this report.

representing the Parliament at external events dedicated to the promotion and protection of children's rights¹².

- *The Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (DG EPRS)*

The Office maintains a well-established cooperation with policy officers from the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) regarding research on child rights related topics. In accordance with its revised mandate, specifically the provisions on communication, expertise development, and knowledge sharing, the Office promotes DG EPRS briefings and documents by integrating them into communications for relevant events and activities. These resources are also featured within the *Latest Information* section of the EP Coordinator's webpage. In addition, in 2025 the Office launched a new section of the webpage dedicated to providing a comprehensive, regularly updated overview of recent Parliament's publications on children's rights, including those delivered by DG EPRS.

Cooperation with the Citizens' Enquiries Unit (AskEP)

The link with the Citizens Enquiries Unit has also been strengthened in recent year. The Office of the EP Coordinator assisted in updating model answers for Members concerning international parental child abduction and other cross-border family disputes. This collaboration established a standard procedure for AskEP to consult the Office on specific individual enquiries related to cross-border family matters involving children to provide quality and comprehensive replies to citizens.

- *The Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM)*

Following the objectives established within the communication framework of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights, the Office in cooperation with relevant services of DG COMM continued to raise awareness of the EP Coordinator's competences and activities and children's rights in general.

Cooperation with the European Parliament InfoHub

[The EP InfoHub](#) serves as the communication facility to reach out to citizens on European policies and the activities of the Parliament. In this view, the EP Coordinator and the Office further developed cooperation and engaged with the EP InfoHub to organise a seminar with experts on empowering children and young people to tackle cyberbullying¹³ and a roundtable discussion with children, members of the Eurochild Children's Council, who presented a child-friendly version of the European Commission guidelines on Mental Health and Wellbeing at

¹² In her capacity of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights, Vice-President Ewa Kopacz often combines her other responsibilities, e.g. Chair of the High-Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity, in her work on enhancing children's rights in the Parliament.

¹³ For more information on the event, please see section III of this report.

School¹⁴. In 2026, the Office already plans to extend this cooperation in view of hosting in the EP InfoHub activities related to EU Children's Participation Platform.

Cooperation with Social Media and Digital Multipliers Unit

Social Media and Digital Multipliers Unit became the Office's main interlocutor on increasing the EP Coordinator's visibility and outreach through the Parliament's social media channels. In June 2025, preceding the summer holiday season, a successful media campaign was launched to raise awareness and support prevention of children going missing. The European emergency hotline 116 000 was extensively promoted across the European Parliament's social media accounts, while a statement from the EP Coordinator achieved significant reach.

In November 2025, to mark World Children's Day, the EP Coordinator recorded a [short video](#) with members of the Eurochild Children Council (ECC) to underscore that children who are aware of their rights can effect positive change. The initiative highlighted the fundamental responsibility of adults and especially policymakers to actively listen to and integrate children's perspectives into decision-making processes. The message achieved high levels of social media engagement, generating significant reach and receiving positive feedback from the online community.

Cooperation with Website Management Unit

The [EP Coordinator on Children's Rights webpage](#) is part of the Parliament's website. In 2025, the Office of the EP Coordinator implemented significant upgrades to improve the webpage's accessibility and transparency and uphold the high level of quality content. Working in close collaboration with DG COMM's Website Management Unit, the Office added two specialised spaces on the EP Coordinator's webpage. First one is dedicated to the most recent Parliament's publications related to children's rights¹⁵ and is updated regularly. On the second one, citizens can easily access the annual activity reports. In addition, the links to information sources have been updated and the Data Protection Notice adapted to the organisational changes within the Parliament's administration.

In parallel, the Office is updating the *Latest Information* section of the webpage on a regular basis to inform citizens and stakeholders effectively and continuously on the EP Coordinator most important activities and to share relevant documents provided by the Parliament's services or to provide links to public documents of other EU institutions or international organisations.

These enhancements, following the 2024 technical review, provide citizens with a more intuitive and transparent interface for navigating the EP Coordinator's work.

¹⁴ For more information on the event, please see section III of this report.

¹⁵ Those are in house publications published by DG EPRS and studies and in-depth analysis commissioned by Policy Departments Units.

Cooperation with European Parliament Liaison Offices

The EP Coordinator and her Office collaborated with the European Parliament Liaison Offices when they reached out with the enquiries on the cross-border family disputes addressed by citizens.

- *The Directorate-General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences (DG LINC)*

The EP Coordinator and her Office enjoys a good working cooperation established with DG LINC. On a regular basis, the Office collaborates with relevant services, including Conference Coordination Unit, Remote Conference Services Unit and Multilingual Solutions Unit. The support from those services is extremely valuable in view of the organisation of multilingual conferences with remote participation and events where *ad personam* interpretation is needed, allowing the EP Coordinator and the Office a better outreach to citizens and experts and the creation of forums of exchange for professionals from European Union and beyond. It also guarantees multilingual communication using innovative approach and methods.

Cooperation with the European Commission

The close cooperation with relevant directorates-general and services in the European Commission is vital for the EP Coordinator and her Office. Depending on the topic, the Office reaches out and collaborates with the relevant EP Coordinator's counterparts in the Commission to act in view of promoting and protecting the rights of the child within and outside the European Union.

- *Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport*

Following the European Parliament's approval of the European Commission and shortly after the new College of Commissioners took office, in February 2025, the EP Coordinator held an introductory meeting with Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport, Glenn Micallef. His portfolio covers, among others, the oversight of the implementation of the 2021 EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, he has thus become the main interlocutor in the Commission for the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights. This meeting allowed to establish fruitful cooperation between the Commissioner and the EP Coordinator and to foster an effective working relationship between the Commissioner's Cabinet and the Office, that had continued on a regular basis throughout the year.

The EP Coordinator addressed the Commissioner with a list of ideas and actions that could be considered in view of further strengthening children's rights at local, national and EU level, declaring her full support and readiness to work together on the effective implementation and possible development of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. The EP Coordinator insisted yet again on her long-standing call to introduce children's rights tests into the EU better regulation toolbox on impact assessment that would guarantee that all new EU legislative proposals are properly checked in view of their possible impact on the rights of the child. She

also reminded about the Parliament's call on the EU accession to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Protocols. Furthermore, the EP Coordinator highlighted the need for an EU roadmap for a high-quality child rights education addressing both young and older generations, that would support the effective implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the possibility to grant an award from the European children to the EU child rights champions.

Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST)

The cooperation with the team of European Commission Coordinator on the Rights of the Child, that is placed within DG JUST, is valuable and important for the EP Coordinator and her Office. This well-established and close relation with the EC Child Rights Team results in regular exchange of information and cooperation on topics of mutual interest. In addition, the Office holds an excellent collaboration with the Civil Justice Unit in the field of European family law, cross-border family disputes and mediation.

○ *15th European Forum on the Rights of the Child*

On 23-24 June 2025, the Commission organised the 15th European Forum on the Rights of the Child¹⁶ that brought together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss the EU child rights agenda. The Forum serves as a key platform for dialogue and exchange between children, policymakers, civil society and international organisations.

The EP Coordinator on Children's Rights took part in the high-level discussion on advancing child protection for safer and more resilient societies. Building on the [Commission's recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems](#), the panellists highlighted key challenges and opportunities in effective implementation of child protection measures. The EP Coordinator emphasised that society must place children at the heart of all strategic actions and build robust protection systems to guarantee every child a safe childhood and an equitable start in adulthood.

During the Forum, children and young people presented the [Call to Action for EU and national decision-makers](#) that reflected nearly three years of consultation within the EU Children's Participation Platform. The Call addressed themes of primary importance to children and their recommendations highlighted five urgent areas for intervention: intergenerational fairness, wellbeing in schools, collective efforts against hate, online safety and cyberbullying, and climate action.

○ *EU Children's Participation Platform*

One of the main goals of the 2021 EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child was to establish, with support of the Parliament and jointly with child rights organisations, an [EU Children's Participation Platform](#), to connect existing child participation mechanisms at local, national

¹⁶ Please see details of the Forum [Agenda of the 15th Forum on the Rights of the Child](#) and [Recording of the plenary sessions](#).

and EU level, and to involve children in a meaningful way in the decision-making processes at EU level.

2nd General Assembly of the EU Children's Participation Platform

On 20-21 June 2025 in Brussels, the Platform held its [2nd General Assembly](#), which brought together 80 children aged between 10-17. Over two days, the children discussed various topics of their concern related to children's rights. As the result, they prepared the Call to Action for EU and national decision-makers that was presented at the 15th EU Forum on the Rights of the Child. The Office of the EP Coordinator actively participated in the event.

Meetings of Platform's Advisory Board

The Advisory Board consists of children and experts from the EC Child Rights Team, the European Parliament, European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the Council of Europe, Children's Rights Action Group (CRAG) and UNICEF working together to develop the platform and work programme for the coming years. The EP Coordinator is represented by her Office as a member of the Advisory Board of the Children's Participation Platform that meets biannually. The 6th and the 7th Advisory Board meetings, that took place on 24 March and 13 October 2025 accordingly, were dedicated to evaluating the Platform's first years of functioning and implementation of its [2025-2026 Work Plan](#). The members of the Advisory Board, children and adults, reviewed the progress in four areas of the Work Plan: equal opportunities and social inclusion, online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate action, and reflected on the next phase of the EU Children's Participation Platform. The Office of the EP Coordinator attended both meetings and contributed to the discussions.

The next Advisory Board meeting is planned to take place in the Parliament's premises in March 2026, in close collaboration with the EP Coordinator and her Office.

○ *EU Network for Children's Rights*

The [EU Network for Children's Rights](#), established in 2022 as a result of the EU strategy on the Rights of the Child, has as an objective to facilitate the exchange of information, good practices and mutual learning among EU Member States, the Commission and relevant stakeholders working in the field of children's rights. The EP Coordinator represents the Parliament at the Network and participates in it through her Office.

On 25 November 2025, the EU Network for Children's Rights convened its seventh meeting in a hybrid format, bringing together 90 delegates from Member States, international organisations and civil society. Discussions focused on strengthening the European Child Guarantee, advancing online safety and tackling cyberbullying, and promoting climate action and intergenerational dialogue. Attendees also examined policy developments on child protection, children's mental health and safeguards in sport and cultural activities, illustrated by examples of EU-funded projects. Additionally, updates were shared on progressing child-

friendly justice in Member States, including on the revision of the Victims' Rights Directive, the EU Justice scoreboard and EU–Council of Europe child-friendly justice project¹⁷.

- *Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC)*

Since 2024, the Office enjoys good cooperation with the relevant services in DG EAC, focusing on children's mental health and wellbeing at school. This collaboration resulted in a number of meetings and events, including those organised by the EP Coordinator, where colleagues from Schools and Multilingualism Unit provided expertise and shared information about the projects they are involved in.

- *Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME)*

The Office held an introductory meeting with the Office of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, that is placed in DG HOME. Given that children represent approximately 15% of trafficking victims in the EU, the meeting explored ways for cooperation on child trafficking, recruitment (both online and offline), and vulnerabilities of children in migration and digital environments. The Office informed the interlocutors about the role and activities of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights and expressed availability for further cooperation.

- *European Union Visitors Programme (EUVP)*

The Office of the EP Coordinator continues to participate in the EUVP, holding meetings with young professionals from countries outside the EU and discussing the activities of the EP Coordinator related to the cross-border family disputes and other child's rights related initiatives at EU level. In 2025, the Office held three meetings with young professionals from the United Kingdom, Sierra Leone and Ukraine. The Office also assists the EUVP participants with sourcing relevant and reliable information on ongoing work on legislation concerning children's rights.

Cooperation with the Council of Europe

In 2025, the Office of the EP Coordinator revived the cooperation with the relevant partners in the Council of Europe (CoE) on the topics related to protection and promotion of children's rights. The Office reached out to different structures of the CoE engaging with the [Child Rights Division](#) to establish a framework for direct contacts at the administrative level between the Office and the Division and to better understand possible areas for collaboration, knowledge sharing and conjunction in the day-to-day work.

The Office has also established good working relations with the Parliamentary [Network on the situation of the children of Ukraine](#), that is operating under the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). On 15 May 2025, the EP Coordinator addressed the conference organised under the auspices of PACE in Helsinki on "Deported Ukrainian Children: European

¹⁷ For more information please consult [here](#).

actions”¹⁸, The EP Coordinator underlined once again that Russia is doing everything to prevent thousands of deported Ukrainian children from being found and she applauded activities of Ukrainian institutions and non-governmental organisations that, supported by lawyers, researchers, journalists and activists from all over the world, work tirelessly to help as many children as possible to return home. She also emphasized that the international pressure is important and constant reminding and raising awareness among people around the world are crucial to ensure that the systemic crime against Ukrainian children is not forgotten and diminished by Russian propaganda. The EP Coordinator engagement followed on from previous years where she took actively stance and numerous actions on the situation of Ukrainian children.

Cooperation with NGOs, stakeholders and experts active in the field of children’s rights

In 2025, the EP Coordinator and her Office continued to expand and strengthen cooperation with institutions, bodies and stakeholders across the EU that focus on the protection and promotion of the rights of the child in several different fields. During the year, the EP Coordinator and/or her Office met and/or collaborated with many stakeholders, including government representatives, organisations and associations from the Member States, and with professionals dealing with specific issues relating to the rights of the child including among others:

- European Network of Ombudsperson for Children (ENOC)

The EP Coordinator and her Office have a close and well-established cooperation with [ENOC](#), including via the regular working meetings between the Office and the ENOC Secretariat. Following the good practice of presenting the voice of children collaborating in [European Network of Young Advisors \(ENYA\)](#), on the initiative of the EP Coordinator, the Chair of the ENOC was invited to the EMPL-JURI public hearing on the on protection of children’s rights in foster and institutional care¹⁹, to present the 2024 ENYA recommendations on this issue.

On 18 March 2025, the EP Coordinator held a meeting with the members of ENOC’s bureau to discuss the range of topics related to children’s rights including those related to the 2025 and 2026 annual theme chosen by ENOC on the right to physical health and LGBTQ+ rights.

In this regard, the EP Coordinator was invited to participate in the [29th Annual Conference of the ENOC](#) that took place in Bucharest on 17-18 September 2025. At the event, the Ombudspersons from across Europe discussed together with young people representing ENYA the right of children to physical health, including universal access to healthy food, question of advertisement and consumption of energy drinks and vapes, access to health care and the right to be informed about treatments and therapies and protection and promotion of the children’s right to sport, rest, play and physical activity. In her address to conference participants, the EP Coordinator underlined the enormous challenges that Europe faces when it comes to public health seen from the perspective of children and young people, including disinformation about

¹⁸ For agenda, please see Annex IV.

¹⁹ For more information about the hearing please consult the part of this report on cooperation with parliamentary committees.

medicaments, vaccinations, and unproven therapies and diets that contradict scientific and medical advances. She pointed that currently young people are bombarded with adverts for unhealthy products, stimulants, and false and harmful visions of how they should look, what they should eat, drink, and behave to be attractive and accepted. EP Coordinator underlined that to overcome those challenges we need to focus on education and prevention from a young age, teaching hygiene, diet and exercise, explain how the body works and how to prevent disease and provide reliable, age-appropriate sexual education. During the two-day conference ENYA presented the report [“Let’s talk young. Let’s talk about children’s rights to physical health”](#) that contains a set of 46 recommendations for policy makers on different aspects related to children and young people physical health. Some of those recommendations were presented by the EP Coordinator at the ENVI public hearing on *Food safety risks linked to energy drink consumption in minors*²⁰.

- United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts (CAAC)

The EP Coordinator met with recently appointed SRSG CAAC Ms Vanessa Frazier on 2 December 2025 to discuss the worsening situation of children affected by armed conflicts. The conversation focused especially on children in Ukraine and in Gaza, but also in different conflicts across the world. Ms Frazier underlined the importance of the [UN resolution on Ukrainian children deported to Russia](#). The resolution was eventually adopted by the UN General Assembly on 3 December 2025, and, apart from a strong demand to safely and immediately return those children [from Russia], granted the SRSG CAAC the mandate to coordinate efforts on tracking and access to the facilities where children are being kept. The Office of the EP Coordinator stays in contact with the CAAC Office in Brussels, sharing information and exchanging knowledge on the topics of common interest.

- Eurochild

The EP Coordinator and the Office continue to have direct and close cooperation with [Eurochild](#). The exchanges over the last year focused on the Eurochild’s projects and activities related to mental health and wellbeing at school and combating child poverty and social exclusion. Eurochild stands ready to provide the EP Coordinator and her Office with the information and research on the variety of issues related to protection and promotion of children’s rights, including contacts with experts and specialised organisations in the field across Europe.

On 28 January 2025, the EP Coordinator held a meeting with the then President of Eurochild, Ms Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, to discuss in detail the key findings of the [2024 Eurochild flagship report on children in need across Europe](#) and explore further ways of working together. During this meeting the idea of roundtable with relevant stakeholders on strengthening children’s rights emerged that will be pursued in early 2026.

²⁰ For more information about the hearing please consult the part of this report on cooperation with parliamentary committees.

On 19 November 2025, the eve of the World Children's Day, the EP Coordinator in collaboration with Eurochild and Learning for Well-being Foundation organised a meeting with [Eurochild Children's Council](#) (ECC) representatives to discuss the recently completed child-friendly version of the European Commission [Guidelines on Mental Health and Wellbeing at School](#)²¹. Additionally, in cooperation with DG COMM, a short video was recorded for the Parliament's social media accounts, where young people from ECC together with the EP Coordinator delivered a message to mark the World Children's Day and the anniversary of the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Missing Children Europe (MCE)

The EP Coordinator and the Office continue the collaboration with [Missing Children Europe](#), especially in view of the parental child abduction cases and mediation.

In May 2025, to commemorate International Missing Children's Day, the EP Coordinator participated in a memorial event dedicated to missing children and their families. This initiative, which included a short interview with the EP Coordinator, sought to provide solidarity to affected families and enhance public awareness of 116 000, the EU-wide hotline for missing children.

In November 2025, the EP Coordinator addressed the participants of the conference promoting the iCare2 project that focuses on family mediation organised by Missing Children Europe and Defence for Children International²². The Office actively participated in the two-day seminar presenting the work of the EP Coordinator in this field.

- Hope & Homes for Children

The EP Coordinator and the Office cooperates with [Hope & Homes for Children](#) in respect to their work across Europe on the transition from institutional to family or community-based care for children. The EP Coordinator met with Moldovan a delegation of child and disability rights advocates to discuss child protection and care reform in Moldova, also in view of the accession negotiations. Furthermore, several working-level meetings were held between Hope and Homes for Children and the Office in view of updates on the deinstitutionalisation of childcare across the EU.

- Alliance for Childhood European Network Group/Learning for Well-being Foundation

The EP Coordinator and her Office worked closely in 2025 with [Alliance for Childhood European Network Group](#) and their partners from [Learning for Well-being Foundation](#) on public policies related to children. This collaboration resulted in an event on empowering children and young people to tackle cyberbullying that took place on 4 March 2025 in EP InfoHub.²³

²¹ For more information on the event, please consult part III of this report.

²² For more information on the iCare2 seminar, please consult part II of this report.

²³ For more information on the event, please consult section III of this report.

- SOS Children’s Villages

To commemorate World Mental Health Day, the EP Coordinator was invited by the [SOS Children’s Villages](#) to participate in their video project aiming to raise awareness on child mental wellbeing.

Additionally, the Office held a meeting with advocacy advisers from [SOS Children’s Villages-Ukraine](#) to discuss country’s progress in child protection and care system reform, as well as remaining challenges in advancing the deinstitutionalisation strategy in Ukraine.

- Czepczyński Family Foundation (CFF)

The EP Coordinator and her Office continue the good collaboration with [CFF](#) on topics related to inclusive education, mental health and well-being of children at school. This resulted in *High-Level Conference: Supporting mental health of children- the role of schools and teachers*²⁴ co-organised with other Members of the European Parliament and the Foundation.

- Cooperation with other stakeholders

Following the collaboration on the conferences organised by the EP Coordinator and her Office and the engagement in various child rights related events in and outside Brussels and online, the Office met and discussed with number of other stakeholders that focus their activities on a wide range of issues related to the protection and promotion of children rights at the international, national and local level.

These meetings included, among others, exchanges with [UNICEF](#) and [Defence for Children International](#) on the situation of children in Gaza and Palestinian Occupied Territory, with the [5Rights Foundation](#), [Internet Watch Foundation](#) and [OpenAI](#) on the protection of children’s rights in the digital environment, with [ITAKA Foundation](#) on missing children, including parental child abductions and pre-mediation services, and with [Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę](#) (Empowering Children Foundation) on the protection of children from sexual abuse.

Furthermore, a series of working meetings were conducted with national and local authorities from both EU and non-EU member states. They included exchanges with the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice, the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Families, and the Deputy Mayor of Amsterdam.

EP Coordinator’s Agenda 2026 in the field of coordination of the EP activities in the field of children’s rights

The EP Coordinator will continue to cooperate closely with relevant parliamentary committees and the Commission to facilitate the implementation of the 2021 EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and to raise awareness on the topics important to children and adolescents.

²⁴ For more information on the event, please consult section III of this report.

Physical and mental health of children and young people and online safety will remain the main focus of the EP Coordinator activities. The EP Coordinator will continue to pursue the progress on some horizontal topics, including on child rights impact assessment and possible EU accession to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, also in collaboration with the Commission.

The EP Coordinator and her Office plan to explore new formats and ways of collaboration with relevant stakeholders. Consequently, on 5 February 2026, first roundtable on *Joining Forces: strengthening cooperation for children's rights in Europe* hosted by the EP Coordinator and co-organised by ENOC and Eurochild took place. The event aimed to foster strategic dialogue between independent national child rights institutions and Eurochild member organisations, while strengthening cooperation at both national and EU levels to advance children's rights across Europe. In March 2026, the Office will engage in organising the meeting of the EU Children's Participation Platform Advisory Board that will take place for the first time in the premises of the Parliament.

The EP Coordinator and the Office stay open to expand its networks to other EU bodies, like the European Economic and Social Committee, and stakeholders who are willing to discuss and engage on topics related to promotion and protection of children's rights.

In 2026, the Office will continue close cooperation with all relevant Parliament's services to ensure the most effective communication of the EP Coordinator's activities, including on the competences related to parental child abduction cases and other cross-border family disputes.

II. International child abduction and other cross-border family disputes

2025 activities summary

During the first full year of the 10th parliamentary term, the EP Coordinator and her Office continued their work in the field of international family law, child-friendly justice and mediation. The Office continues to serve as a central information point for EU citizens in international parental child abduction or other cross-border family disputes and to engage with all relevant European and national institutions, authorities, organisations and experts on the topic, sharing knowledge and expertise both within and outside the Parliament.

Individual enquiries on parental child abductions, cross-border family cases and child related issues

The EP Coordinator is uniquely positioned to understand and react, within her mandate, to the difficulties faced by parents and children in cross-border family disputes across the European Union and beyond, in particular in case of parental child abductions. This is made possible

through her Office's direct contact with European citizens via submitted enquiries and with relevant stakeholders in the Member States and beyond. In 2025, the EP Coordinator and her Office continued to serve as an information point for citizens on parental child abduction and other cross-border family disputes, replying to enquiries related to cross-border family matters that involve children and other child related matters, including those of the domestic nature.

In 2025, the EP Coordinator's Office dealt with almost **60 enquiries from citizens**, noticing an increase in submitted cases, the majority of which being of the cross-border nature. Some of them required extensive research and follow-up exchanges.

Like in previous years, in 2025, when citizens addressed the EP Coordinator on cross-border family matters, the cases were legally complex, highly conflictual and often long running. It needs to be underlined that some cases are longstanding and the Office follows them for more than 3 years, and even up to 7 years. This in itself illustrates the length and complexity of proceedings behind them.

A majority of the enquiries received in the course of 2025 were related to the cases of international child abductions and other cross-border child related disputes (custody and access rights) at different stages of the procedure. They were brought to the attention of the Office by both EU citizens and non-EU citizens. In most of the enquiries received during 2025, those enquiring were the left-behind parents or parents deprived of the regular and meaningful contacts with their children, the clear majority of which were fathers. Some enquiries were also brought to the Office by other family members and by third parties, like foster parents, associations or concerned citizens not directly related to the child.

Additionally, following the evolving communication strategy within the Parliament and expanding contacts with other services of the Parliament that stay in direct contacts with citizens, in 2025 enquires were also submitted to the Office via European Parliament Liaison Office's and AskEP Unit. In those cases, the Office supported the work of the colleagues with its expertise.

The main issues encountered by parents in cross-border family disputes were:

- the difficulties in seeking a legal remedy and in being involved in number of ongoing court proceedings on several different matters,
- access to legal professionals experienced in cross-border family cases,
- lengthy legal proceedings,
- lack of adequate and clear communication and reaction from the relevant authorities that should support them during the dispute of cross-border nature,
- lack or ineffectiveness of enforcement of the final court decisions by national authorities.

In each case, the Office endeavours to provide information to the enquirer on the possible steps to take and on relevant services and authorities in the Member States or in the third countries to contact. On the enquiries related to cross-border dispute concerning children, the Office acts strictly on the understanding that the information and support provided does not amount to or

replace legal advice, which the requesting citizen is strongly encouraged to seek from lawyers with expertise in international family law, should it be required. Also, strict rules on data protection are applied while handling all the enquiries.

In view of the lack of enforcement of a final court decision on the return of the child to the country of habitual residence or custody or in case of alleged breach of international or European law, the EP Coordinator continues to make choice on the use of diplomatic intervention.

The EP Coordinator and the Office do continue to receive enquiries from parents or family members who request the intervention of the EP Coordinator as they do not agree with the decision of the court. Here, the EP Coordinator informs the enquirer that she does not have competence to intervene, influence or change judgments given by the courts of the Member States and third countries. Where appropriate, and based on the details of the individual case, the Office may be able to provide information on relevant services or authorities in the relevant state to assist the enquirer.

After years of steady decrease in enquires related to domestic disputes and situations involving children, the Office observed a significant increase in number of enquiries concerning child related proceedings and alleged breaches of children's rights that are governed by the national laws. Among those enquires a specific new trend was noticed concerning cases of a criminal nature, where children were not only victims of crimes (usually various kinds of violence) but also alleged offenders. Those included the accusations of the criminal acts committed after being recruited/induced online. In all cases of domestic family law disputes or other child related enquires of domestic nature, while the EP Coordinator does not have a competence to deal with such cases, her Office, where appropriate, tried to provide information and refer citizens for assistance and support to relevant authorities and services in the requester's state.

Promotion of the international and EU legal frameworks in the field of the cross-border family law and child-friendly justice

In 2025, the EP Coordinator continued to react to breaches of EU and international law, including the [Council Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1111 of 25 June 2019 on jurisdiction, the recognition and enforcement of decisions in matrimonial matters and the matters of parental responsibility, and on international child abduction \(“Brussels IIb Regulation”\)](#) and the [1980 Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction \(“1980 Hague Convention”\)](#).

The EP Coordinator continued to raise awareness about the EU and international legal framework in the field of cross-border family law and to address the outstanding issues concerning the proper implementation of the existing rules. On the parental child abduction cases and other cross-border family disputes, the EP Coordinator and her Office stay in close cooperation with DG JUST Civil Justice Unit and, where appropriate, other relevant EU bodies.

45th anniversary of the 1980 Hague Convention

Cross-border parental child abductions represent some of the most challenging, legally complex, and emotionally charged family disputes. These conflicts between parents can deeply affect the children caught in the middle of it, leaving long-lasting negative consequences for the entire family, particularly the child. On the other hand, those often dramatic family situations are governed by a well-established international legal framework since decades. In this view, the EP Coordinator asked the Committee on Legal Affairs to organise a workshop to mark the 45th anniversary of signing of the 1980 Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. This significant anniversary created an excellent opportunity to highlight the success and importance of the Convention (this is one of the most successful private international law instruments with currently 103 countries as its parties), address some ongoing issues with its implementation and examine the correlation between the Convention, Brussels Iib Regulation and other Hague Conventions that deal with cross-border family disputes. It was also a good opportunity to discuss the use of mediation in cross-border family disputes in view of its great potential to benefit all family members, especially children.

Following the request, on 3 December 2025 the workshop organised in cooperation with the Policy Department for Justice, Civil Liberties and Institutional Affairs (Policy Department B) took place during the [JURI Committee meeting](#). The workshop gathered well-established experts in the field of cross-border parental abduction, with both academic and practical background²⁵. Prof. Marilyn Freeman explored the 1980 Hague Convention, lessons learned from its application over the years and the ways forward to enhance its impact, focussing on the issue of domestic violence and abductions. Prof. Boriana Musseva on the other hand examined how the Convention influenced the EU rules on resolving parental child abductions, discussed the differences and added value of the Brussels Iib Regulation and highlighted its interplay with the [1996 Hague Convention on Child Protection](#). Furthermore, professionals from the International [Mediation Centre for Family Conflict and Child Abduction](#) (MiKK Centre), Ms Ishtar Khalaf-Newsome and Ms Magdalena Jańczuk, introduced the cross-border family mediation as an effective, faster, and cheaper alternative for resolving parental child abduction and custody cases. They emphasised advantages in facilitating an amicable resolution between parents, by shifting the focus back to the child and encouraging cooperative dialogue. They also underlined the need of the European instrument that could regulate access to mediation in cross-border family dispute and clarify the cross-border enforcement ruled of the mediated agreements. Additionally, the experts delivered in-depth analysis following their presentations during the workshop²⁶.

Cooperation with Central Authorities

To better understand the practicalities of the implementation of the Brussels Iib Regulation and the 1980 Hague Convention in the European Union and beyond, the Office expanded its cooperation and contacts with Central Authorities. They are established under both legal

²⁵ Please see Annex V for workshop's agenda.

²⁶ For detailed information on presentations and in-depth analysis please consult [here](#).

instruments to facilitate the procedures in cross-border child abduction cases and other cross-border family disputes concerning children, thus contributing to the smooth cooperation between the two engaged jurisdictions.

Promotion of family mediation

The EP Coordinator continued to advocate for the use of mediation in disputes involving children in cross-border family cases, in particular among key stakeholders such as judges, lawyers and national central authorities and in the Parliament's work in the field of family law. The EP Coordinator stays in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders on this issue, including with the MiKK Centre and other networks that promote and practise family mediation both at international and national level.

In 2025, the EP Coordinator's Office continued to highlight the importance of mediation to parents while dealing with the enquiries on parental child abduction or other cross-border family cases. Upon the request and/or when deemed appropriate, the Office shared information on the mediation process and its benefits and directed enquirers to the reliable networks of experienced cross-border family mediators.

iCARE 2 project

On 6 and 7 November 2025, the [iCare2](#) partnership organised in Brussels a seminar for legal professionals, mediation providers and trainers. The event was hosted by Missing Children Europe and organised by Defence for Children International – Italy. The [iCare2 seminar “Train the Trainers”](#) aimed to present the national research and methodologies for international family mediation and establishing pre-mediation services in Bulgaria, France, Italy and Poland, which are based on the iCare European Methodology. The iCare2 project is a continuation of the previous iCare action and supports the implementation of Brussels IIb Regulation. The event was addressed by the EP Coordinator, who shared her experience related to promotion of mediation in cross-border family disputes, including in international child abduction cases. The EP Coordinator underlined the benefits of mediation, especially in view of safeguarding rights of children involved in the dispute between parents. She also pointed to challenges that alternative dispute resolution methods face in the context of enquiries that are submitted to the Office.

An independent study on the use and place of family mediation in Member States' legal frameworks

In accordance with the “Recommendations for the future direction and functioning of the European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights and the Office for the 2024-2029 term of the European Parliament”, endorsed by the Bureau on 20 November 2023, the “*EP Coordinator and the Office should have the possibility to undertake independent study on an annual basis with regard to a relevant child rights issue with the support of the in-house research services of Parliament. This proactive and independent research should be presented*”

to the competent Committee. The annual study should also contribute to the institutional memory of the Parliament and future EP Coordinators.”

In this regard and taking into consideration the continuing and close working relationship between the EP Coordinator and the Committee on Legal Affairs in the area of family law and children’s rights, the EP Coordinator decided to exercise this new possibility to undertake an independent study and requested the JURI Committee that such a study be commissioned on the use and place of family mediation in Member States’ legal frameworks. The comparative research would make a valuable contribution to EP Coordinator’s ongoing work on the promotion of the family mediation. The study would aim at mapping access to mediation across Member States and highlight differences and similarities in the provision of mediation in family disputes involving children, such as custody, visiting rights, contacts and maintenance. It would also aim to identify best practices in establishing high-quality mediation services for families and to examine existing requirements for family mediators in each jurisdiction.

Following the decision of JURI Committee Coordinators, a comparative study on the use and place of family mediation in Member States’ legal frameworks was included in the JURI Committee Annual Research Programme 2026 and will be commissioned by the Policy Department B in cooperation with the Office of the EP Coordinator. The foreseen study would potentially be supplementary to another research under the JURI ARP 2026 dealing with mediation/alternative dispute resolution in cross-border family matters, thus creating a package covering the family mediation landscape in European Union both at national and European level.

Collaboration with experts and academia

The EP Coordinator and the Office continue to collaborate with experts, academia and interested stakeholders on the issues related to international family law. The Office follows closely developments in this area and engaging in the discussions on the ongoing projects. In 2025, the Office observed the increased interest of the academia about the raising challenge concerning the relation between domestic violence and parental child abduction. This issue is being raised in the context of the discussion over the effectiveness of the 1980 Hague Convention and its aims. The Office engaged as well in discussions on the interplay between the civil law procedures and criminal law instruments used in cross-border parental child abduction disputes.

Training and knowledge sharing

The EP Coordinator’s Office continues to engage with academia in the field of international family law through participation in trainings, seminars and other events, such as:

- *Annual Conference on European Family Law*, 26-28 September 2025 in Budapest, organised by the Academy of European Law in Trier.
- *New Possibilities and Challenges in Child Abduction Return Proceedings under the Brussels IIb Regulation*, 15 October 2025, webinar organised by MiKK Centre.

- *Mediation in Child Abduction Cases & Choice of Court Agreements (Art. 10 Brussels IIB Regulation)*, 19 November 2025, webinar organised by MiKK Centre.
- *The Children and Armed Conflict Primer*, November 2025, online course organised by the United Nation System Staff College.
- *Children's Rights in the Digital Environment*, December 2025, online course organised by the Council of Europe HELP Programme.

In parallel, within the Parliament, the Office continues to collaborate with relevant services regarding the adequate information on the EP Coordinator's activities as the central information point for citizens on international parental child abduction and other cross-border family disputes. In this view, the Office engaged with colleagues from AskEP unit, DG EPRS and DG COMM to provide and, where needed, to clarify within the Parliament's different communication channels and outreach services the EP Coordinator's mandate while dealing with individual enquiries from citizens.

EP Coordinator's Agenda 2026 in the field of international child abduction and other cross-border family disputes

Guided by her mandate, the EP Coordinator and the Office will continue to provide requesting citizens with information in cross-border family matters and to address the shortcomings in the implementation of the existing rules through diplomatic interventions, where appropriate and deemed necessary. The EP Coordinator will continue to promote mediation in both cross-border and domestic family law disputes especially in view of the planned collaboration with Policy Department B on the independent comparative study on the use and role of mediation in Member States' legal frameworks which presentation and publication is scheduled in the last quarter of 2026.

In previous years, the EP Coordinator and the Office worked actively on the topic of the proper implementation of enforcement measures related to the return proceedings under the 1980 Hague Convention by Japan, based on several cases of non-enforcement of the return decisions that concerned European parents. In the meantime, Japan introduced significant changes in family law that enter into force in May 2026 and the EP Coordinator plans to follow up on this new legal framework in cooperation with the Parliament's Delegation for relations with Japan.

The Office will continue to support the Secretariat of the Committee on Legal Affairs on any activities related to the Committee's competences on cross-border family law, family mediation and child-friendly justice.

III. Mainstreaming children’s voices in the Parliament on specific issues related to children’s rights

As presented under the first part of this annual report, the EP Coordinator and the Office collaborate with wide range of stakeholders, including cooperation with individual Members of the European Parliament, and using different ways, formats and platforms to enhance children’s rights on the Parliament’s agenda and reach out to the largest possible audience interested and active on the issues related to children’s wellbeing, including on mental health and online safety. In this section a few examples of such cooperation are given where children’s and young people’s voices and perspectives are represented and mainstreamed. It needs to be underlined that the EP Coordinator and the Office attach key importance that any event that they are engaged in in whatever form and which involves or asks for presence of any child is guided strictly by the principles on child participation and organised in safe and child-friendly manner.

- **High-Level Conference: Supporting mental health of children - the role of schools and teachers**

EP Coordinator joined forces with the Chair of the Committee on Public Health, Mr Adam Jarubas, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education, Mr Bogdan Zdrojewski and Czepczyński Family Foundation to organise a *High-Level Conference: Supporting mental health of children - the role of schools and teachers* under the patronage of the Polish Presidency of the Council²⁷. The event, that took place on 4 June 2025, was held in hybrid mode and focused on the mental health of children and young people and the positive role that schools and school environment may and should play in supporting wellbeing of their students. Beside the informative and thorough presentations from experts and interesting discussion that engaged the public, participants listened to the testimonials of children from different countries and got an insight into the young people’s world seen from their perspective. Four young girls from Poland delivered a powerful presentation of the “Rat 34” project that aims to show the influence social media and digital world have on youth wellbeing and mental health. The conference gathered participants from all over Europe, including teachers and educators, academics, parents, psychologists, representatives of national and local authorities and a wide range of child rights organisations. All shared examples and good practices together with presentations and additional materials were distributed to all registered participants as a follow up to the event.

- **Empowering children and young people to tackle cyberbullying**

On 4 March 2025, the EP Coordinator, hosted a seminar on “Empowering Children and Young People to Tackle Cyberbullying”²⁸, organised in cooperation with MEP Veronika Cifrová

²⁷ For more details, please see Annex VI.

²⁸ For more details, please see Annex VII.

Ostrihoňová²⁹ and Alliance for Childhood European Network Group. The event, held in the EP InfoHub in hybrid format, focused on the unpacking and defining the phenomenon of cyberbullying. It was underlined that with the increasing use of information and communication technologies and easier access to the online world, cyberbullying became a significant global issue, with serious implications for children and young people's mental health, wellbeing and education. The vibrant exchange between experts representing UNESCO, the organisers and participants, delved into specific aspects of cyberbullying and focused on the support that can be given to children from their parents, teachers and educators to empower them and build resilience against the cyberbullying. The testimony of a young person, who experienced cyberbullying, strongly impacted the participants, who engaged into discussion on the ways to ensure safe online spaces, where children and young people can thrive and develop their potential. The representative of the Commission presented the general overview and timeline for the publication of the EU Action Plan against Cyberbullying³⁰.

- **Mental health and wellbeing at schools with Eurochild Children's Council**

The EP Coordinator in collaboration with Eurochild and Learning for Well-being Foundation organised a meeting with [Eurochild Children's Council](#) (ECC) representatives to discuss the project of ECC devoted to the [Child-friendly version of the European Commission Guidelines on Mental Health and Wellbeing at School](#) created by children for children, ensuring that the output reflects their voices, perspectives, and creativity. Young persons from all over Europe came together to translate the content of the [Commission Guidelines](#) into accessible language and identify concrete 10 actions that children can take to promote mental health and wellbeing at school. On 19 November 2025, in the premises of EP InfoHub, a group of 12 children aged 13–17 from across Europe, presented the result of their work to the EP Coordinator and in the presence of the representatives of the Commission from DG JUST and DG EAC. Young people discussed with the EP Coordinator on how to make school environment a better place for all children, especially in view of raising problems related to mental health. This was a good opportunity to exchange good practices but also to point out the shortcomings and urgent need for more child psychologists and mental health support in schools.

²⁹ MEP Veronika Cifrová Ostrihoňová is a Vice-Chair of Intergroup on Children's Rights.

³⁰ EU Action Plan against Cyberbullying is planned to be published on 10 February 2026.

EMPL JURI Public Hearing
Protection and promotion of the rights of children placed in alternative care

18 March 2025, 14.30-16.30

Room SPAAK 1A2

Draft programme

- **Introduction**
 - **Opening remarks**
 - Li Andersson** - Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
 - Ilhan Kyuchyuk** - Chair of the Committee on Legal Affairs
 - Ewa Kopacz** - VP and EP Coordinator on Children's Rights
 - Commissioner Glenn Micallef** - Commissioner on Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport

 - **The Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Children in Alternative Care - Views of Children and European Ombudspersons for Children**
 - Ms Elina Pekkarinen** - Ombudsman for Children in Finland, Chair of European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)

- **Preventing family separation and protecting children's rights in the placement proceedings**
 - **Prevention and early intervention**
 - Alfonso Lara Montero**, Chief Executive Officer at the European Social Network
 - **Safeguarding rights and the best interests of the child in care proceedings**
 - Daja Wenke**, Independent Researcher and Policy Analyst, Rights of the Child - Implementation of International Standards
 - **Cross-border placement under the Brussels IIb Regulation and cooperation in view of placement of unaccompanied minors, including children from Ukraine**
 - Mara van der Poel** - legal advisor/coordinator at the Central Authority International Children's Issues, Ministry of Justice and Security in Netherlands
 - Rieke Gremmen** - legal advisor at the Child Care and Protection Board (RdvK), Ministry of Justice and Security in Netherlands

- **How to support children in foster care and when leaving after**
 - **Guaranteeing quality in the care and protection of children**
 - Maria Dantcheva**, Deputy Director Programme, Eastern Central Europe and Middle East, SOS Children's Villages International
 - **Leaving care - what next**
 - **Professor Robbie Gilligan**, Fellow Emeritus, Social Work and Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin

- **Q&A session (approx. 55 min)**
 - **Closing remarks by the Chairs of the Committees**

Annex II

European Parliament

2019-2024



Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Exchange of Views on the situation of young carers in Europe

Tuesday, 18 March 2025, 11:30 - 12:30

Room: SPAAK (1A002)

Chaired by: Li ANDERSSON, EMPL Chair

DRAFT PROGRAMME

11:30 - 11:35 *Opening remarks by Li ANDERSSON, EMPL Chair*

*Introductory remarks by Ewa KOPACZ, European Parliament's
Coordinator on Children's Rights*

11:35 - 11:50 *Interventions by an expert and a representative of young carers:*

- **Sanna NIVAKOSKI**, Research Officer, Social Policies Unit, EUROFOUND
- **Marjet KARSENBERG**, member of Working Group on Young Carers, EUROCARERS

11:50 - 12:20 *Questions and Answers*

12:20 - 12:25 *Possible comments by the European Commission (tbc)*

12:25 - 12:30 *Concluding remarks by Li ANDERSSON, EMPL Chair*

FINAL PROGRAMME

IMCO-PETI joint Public Hearing

“Protecting children and adolescents in digital environments: challenges and policy solutions”

(based on Petitions Nos 0005/2021, 1189/2024, 1428/2024, 1479/2024 and 0081/2025)

Tuesday, 4 November 2025

14.30 to 16.30

European Parliament, Brussels

ANTALL 4Q1

FINAL PROGRAMME

Joint IMCO-PETI Public Hearing

“Protecting children and adolescents in digital environments: challenges and policy solutions”

Tuesday, 4 November 2025 at 14:30-16:30 (ANTALL 4Q1)

Opening remarks

14.30 - 14.35 Mr Bogdan Rzońca, Chair of the Committee on Petitions
Ms Ewa Kopacz, EP Coordinator on Children’s Rights

**14.35 - 15:25 Panel 1 - Protecting minors in digital environments:
current challenges and existing regulatory framework in the EU**

- **The existing regulatory framework in the EU for the protection of minors in digital environment, including the Guidelines on protection of minors online**
 - Ms Julia Van Best, Deputy Head of Unit - DSA protection of minors and other societal risks, DG CONNECT (8 mins)
- **Societal challenges and risks minors face online — from excessive social media use to harmful content, cyberbullying, addictive design and online games**
 - Ms Priscille Kulczyk, legal expert and associate researcher - Centre européen pour le droit et la justice (ECLJ) (8 mins)
 - Mr Urs Buscke, senior legal officer - BEUC (The European Consumer Organisation) (8 mins)

Q&A session (25 mins)

**15:25 - 16:20 Panel 2 - Protecting minors in digital environments:
effectiveness of current rules and future policy**

- **Effectiveness of the implementation of current rules and responsibilities of different stakeholders**
 - Ms Marina Fernández, President, and Ms Noemí Puigdemívol, member of the legal committee - association “Adolescència Lliure de mòbils” (8 mins)
 - Mr Bolesław Michalski, founder of Opsec4Kids, expert in children’s digital education and cybersecurity (8 mins)
- **Potential future policy initiatives to address remaining shortcomings in strengthening the safety of minors online**
 - Ms Maria-Myrto Kanellopoulou, Head of Unit - Consumer Law, and Ms Denisa Alexandroaiei, DG JUST (8 mins)

Q&A session (25 mins)

Concluding remarks

- 16.20 – 16.25 Ms Anna Cavazzini, Chair of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection**
- Mr Bogdan Rzońca, Chair of the Committee on Petitions**

Annex IV



AS/Soc/NCU/CONF(2025)1

Draft Programme

Conference on Deported Ukrainian Children: European actions organised under the patronage of the First Lady of Finland Ms Suzanne Elizabeth Innes-Stubb

Helsinki 15 May 2025

09:30-10:30 Introductory statements

- Ms. Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Vice-President of PACE, Introductory words
- Mr. Jussi Halla-aho, Speaker of the Parliament of Finland, Welcoming words
- Ms. Sanni Grahn-Laasonen, Minister of Social Security, Finland
- Mr. Michael McGrath, EU Commissioner for Justice (video message)
- Ms. Despina Chatzivassiliou, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

10:30-12:00 Illegality of deportation of Ukrainian children: accountability and restoration of justice

Moderated by: Ms. Olena Khomenko (Ukrainian MP, Chair of the PACE Network Ukrainian Children)

- Ms. Pia Kauma, President of the OSCE PA
- Mr. Dmytro Lubinets, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, ONLINE
- Mr. Andrew Gardner, ODIHR, Deputy Head of the Human Rights Department
- Ms. Victoria Litvinova, Acting Prosecutor General of Ukraine
- Ms. Kateryna Rashevskya, legal expert at the Regional Center for Human Rights
- Ms Katarina Lughofer, Head of Sector Director's Office, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Discussion

12:00-13:00 LUNCH IN-HOUSE

13:00-14:30 Return of children: what can be done?

Moderated by: *Ms. Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (Finnish MP, Vice-President of PACE)*

- Ms Ewa Kopacz, Vice-President of the European Parliament (video message)
- Ms. Dariia Zarivna, Operational Director of the Bring Kids Back UA Initiative
- Mr. Nathaniel Raymond, Executive Director of the Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale University
- Ms. Maria Stockhaus, Vice-President of the Nordic Council
- Lady Helena Kennedy, co-chair of the Bring Kids Back Task Force and Director of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), ONLINE
- Ms. Iryna Tuliakova, Head of Coordination Centre for Family Upbringing and Child Care in Ukraine

Discussion

14.30-15.00 COFFEE BREAK

15.00-16.15 Future needs of returned children, their rehabilitation and reintegration

Moderated by: *Ms. Kasia Madera (Journalist, BBC world news presenter)*

- Ms. Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Special Envoy on the situation of children of Ukraine
- Ms. Elina Pekkarinen, Ombudsman for Children (Finland), Chairperson of ENOC
- Ms. Oleksandra Matviichuk (Centre for Civil Liberties), Nobel Peace Prize 2022, ONLINE
- Ms. Mariam Lambert, CEO/Co-Founder/ Emile Foundation

Discussion

WORKSHOP

45th Anniversary of the Signing of the 1980 Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

Organised by the Policy Department for Justice, Civil Liberties and Institutional Affairs for the Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI)

AGENDA

Wednesday, 3 December 2025

14.30 to 16.00

Room ALTIERO SPINELLI 3G2

- 14.30 - 14.40 Welcome by **Ilhan KYUCHUK**, Chair of the Committee on Legal Affairs
- Introductory remarks by **Vice-President Ewa KOPACZ**, EP Coordinator on Children's Rights
- 14.40 - 14.50 The 1980 Hague Convention: lessons learned and ways forward
- **Prof. Dr Marilyn FREEMAN** (University of Westminster)
- 14.50 - 15.00 The 1980 Hague Convention: the main differences and the added value of the Brussels IIb Regulation & the interplay with the 1996 Hague Convention
- **Prof. Dr Boriana MUSSEVA** (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski)
- 15.00 - 15.25 Mediation in Cross-Border Parental Child Abduction Cases
- **Ms Ishtar KHALAF-NEWSOME & Ms Magdalena JANCZUK** (International Mediation Centre for Family Conflict and Child Abduction - MiKK)
- 15.25 - 16.00 *Questions and Answers*

Annex VI



High-Level Conference: Supporting mental health of children - the role of schools and teachers



Date and Time:

4 June, 9.30 - 12.30

Hybrid Event

European Parliament, JAN 6Q1 and Online

Under the patronage of the Polish Presidency of the Council

Co-organised by

Ewa Kopacz,

Vice-President, the European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights

Adam Jarubas,

Chair of the Committee on Public Health

Bogdan Zdrojewski,

Vice-Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education

in collaboration with

Czeczpyński Family Foundation

Programme

09.30 - 09.35 **Opening statement**

Ewa Kopacz • Vice-President and the European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights

09.35 - 10.00 **Keynote addresses:**

Wojciech Konieczny • Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health, Poland

Paulina Piechna-Więckiewicz • Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Education, Poland

Adam Struzik • M.D. Marshal of Mazovia Region – capital region of Poland, Permanent Member of the Committee of the Regions, member of the CoR Interregion Group on Health and Wellbeing

Glenn Micallef • Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport - video message

10.00 - 10.45 **Panel I: Setting the scene- Mental health and wellbeing of children and youth**

under chairmanship of **Adam Jarubas**, Chair of the Committee on Public Health

The state of mental health of children and young people in Europe

- Children and young people testimonials
- "Children's Realities in Europe: Progress & Gaps", Ally Dunhill, Director of Policy, Advocacy and Communications Eurochild
- "Rat 34 - influence of social media and digital world on youth wellbeing and mental health", Zuzanna Jończyk, Hanna Kuźmitowicz, Julia Perlejewska, Zuzanna Rudziński, youth representatives

10.45 - 11.30 **Panel II: Supporting wellbeing and mental health of children and youth - the role of schools**

under chairmanship of **Bogdan Zdrojewski**, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education

Examples of best practices

- Emotional education at schools- „ABC of Emotions”, Damian Kupczyk, President of Czepczyński Family Foundation, Poland
- Health, education and guidelines for teachers working with children and youth in suicide crisis, Aleksandra Lewandowska, National Consultant in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry, Poland
- Wellbeing of students and policy on the use of mobile phones at schools, Kamila Malik, Director of European School Brussels II

11.30 - 12.25 **Panel III: Open discussion on how to support schools in their preventive role: what can be done at EU, national and regional level (with participation of the audience)**

Moderator: **Paulina Stochniałek**, Advisor to the Board of Czepczyński Family Foundation

- Solaÿman Laqdim, General Delegate for Children's Rights, Belgium/French Community
- Aleksandra Lewandowska, National Consultant in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry
- Kamila Malik, Director of European School Brussels II
- Petra Kogelnig, Secretary General, European Parents Association
- Kadri Soova, Director, Mental Health Europe

12.25 - 12.30 **Closing remarks**

After the conference, there will be networking opportunity with refreshments served.

Organizers:



In collaboration with:





96th Quality of Childhood (QoC Talk)

Empowering children and young people to tackle cyberbullying

Date and Time:

Tuesday 4th March 2025 11.00 - 12.30 CET

Hybrid Event

European Parliament Info Hub & online

Hosted by

Ewa Kopacz

Vice President and the European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights

in collaboration with

Veronika Cifrová Ostrihoňová,

MEP, Co-Chair of the Intergroup on Children

and

Alliance for Childhood European Network Group

Programme

The event will be moderated by:

Chiara Piccolo • *Managing Director of the Alliance for Childhood*

Monika Jagiello • *Administrator in the Office of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights*

11.00 Words of welcome and opening

VP Ewa Kopacz • EP Coordinator on Children's Rights

Veronika Cifrová Ostrihoňová • Co-Chair of Intergroup on Children

11.10 Introduction

Christopher Clouder • Chairman of Alliance for Childhood European Network Group

11.20 Cyberbullying in online spaces, typologies and impact on young people

Prof. O'Higgins Norman • UNESCO Chair on Bullying and Cyberbullying and Director, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre

11.35 Supporting the mental health of children and youth through fostering resilience

Clara Aerts • Expert on the HERMMES project coordinated by ECSWE (European Council for Steiner/Waldorf Education)

11.50 Youth perspective of the phenomenon

Fiammetta Montali • Student from Lille University Law Department

12.00 Q&A from participants

In presence of the representative of the Commission

Facilitator: Janni Nicol • Board Member of Alliance For Childhood

12.25 Closing words and end of the event

Christopher Clouder • Chairman of Alliance for Childhood European Network Group

