

Terre des hommes supports countries in Europe to build child-friendly justice

What is child-friendly justice in the eyes of children?

- ***“A judicial system where a child is an active participant and not just a passive subject, a judicial system which is not about a child, but with a child.”*** (Serbia, a 17-year-old boy and an 18-year-old girl)
- ***“A justice system suited to a child, so that when he/she grows up, the child can be an active member of the community and benefit the community itself.”*** (Greece)



Between 1.3 and 1.5 million children per year are annually deprived of liberty on the basis of a judicial or administrative decision, while there are more than 7 million children per year deprived of liberty, in total. This includes children in the administration of justice, children living in places of detention with their parents, children deprived of liberty for migration-related reasons, children deprived of liberty in care institutions (including institutions for children with disabilities), children deprived of liberty related to armed conflict, and children deprived of liberty for national security reasons. Deprivation of liberty is still largely used across all civil, administrative and criminal justice systems also in Europe.¹ Many European countries still lack a justice system that would meet children’s needs and fully respect their rights. Moreover, the importance of children’s participation is often neglected, and their views and experiences are rarely considered.

Terre des hommes (Tdh), a leading international organisation for children’s aid, promotes child-friendly justice in Europe and supports states to improve their policies and practices and ensure effective access to justice for all children. The organisation engages with children to understand their perspective and empowers them to become agents of change who advocate for child-centred justice.

In 2020, the “Access to Justice” programme of Tdh in Europe was running a total of 8 projects in 7 countries (Albania, Kosovo, Greece, Romania, Hungary, The Netherlands, Serbia), reaching over 2460

¹ See Policy brief: [JUST with children. Child-friendly justice for all children in Europe](https://tdh-europe.org/library/policy-brief-just-with-children-child-friendly-justice-for-all-children-in-europe/7293)

In response to the Consultation on the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021-2024, available at: <https://tdh-europe.org/library/policy-brief-just-with-children-child-friendly-justice-for-all-children-in-europe/7293>.



beneficiaries (children, legal and child protection professionals) from direct services, capacity building activities, awareness raising campaigns and advocacy actions.

Innovative projects for a lasting impact

Together with valuable partners, Tdh currently implements a series of projects that address specific areas of child justice, strongly interlinked with child protection:

- The EU-funded [i-RESTORE project](#) encourages the application of restorative justice in cases involving child victims in Albania, Greece, and Romania, as a way for better protection of children.
- The EU-funded [FOCUS project](#) aims to develop a practice of multidisciplinary individual assessment of children, that will ensure individualised responses, in the best interest of the child. Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Serbia, and The Netherlands are the main beneficiary countries.
- The EU-funded **CLEAR-Rights project** improves equal access to a lawyer for children suspected or accused of crime, through strengthening access to quality and specialised government-funded legal aid and pro bono legal assistance. The project will specifically support Hungary, Romania, France, Belgium, and The Netherlands.
- As part of the [European Barnahus Movement](#) and **PROMISE project**, Tdh supports the creation throughout Europe of a multidisciplinary service – Barnahus, a multidisciplinary model which ensures that child victims can receive help from professional interviews and medical services, receive psychological support and therapy in a child-friendly setting that prevents (re)traumatisation.
- Several projects at country level in [Romania](#), Albania and Kosovo focus on the **psychosocial wellbeing, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society of children and youth who committed an offense**. For example, through the [PRECISION project](#) in Romania, Tdh helps children and youth in correctional facilities and detention centres to develop their social skills, resilience, and self-esteem, as well as to gain digital, employability and entrepreneurial skills.

Protecting children through improved practices

To build a solid foundation, Tdh starts each project with a review of the existing legal systems and processes and consults all relevant stakeholders to identify gaps and best practices. The findings are used to develop and pilot new or improved methods and procedures. The [latest research reports](#) address the use of restorative justice with child victims.

Following that, the organisation **develops professional guidance and carries out trainings to build the capacities of legal and child protection actors** at national and local level and to support them in implementing the new practices. Online courses are created and made available on the [ChildHub platform](#) to allow free access to knowledge to any interested professional.

Empowering children to advocate for child-centred justice

“We strive to provide children and young people with a platform that enables them to share their experiences and learn from each other, to influence practice and promote child-friendly justice at national and international forums,” says Mariama Diallo, Regional Programme Manager, Access to Justice, at Terre des hommes in Europe.

Based on a Tdh [methodology](#), **Child Advisory Boards (CABs) are set up in each country** where the projects are implemented. In 2020, **71 Children and young people from Child Advisory Boards** in Albania, Greece, Romania, the Netherlands, Serbia and Bulgaria provided monthly feedback to project partners on restorative justice and individual needs assessments for children. They bring together children and young people who are interested in the justice system or might have experience with it. The members of the CABs take part in trainings where they learn about their rights and how to claim them, as well as about concepts of restorative justice and child-friendly justice. They are also regularly consulted to share feedback and input on project activities and materials, research, and policy work. Through the participatory [YouCreate methodology](#), **children and young people are guided to use media and art for creating their own forms of expression**, that will help them advocate for child rights and child-centred justice.



Influencing sustainable change

Since 2009, Tdh has been co-organising the [World Congress on Justice with Children](#). This event is a unique chance to bring together the key actors in child justice and child rights at international level, to promote dialogue and cooperation on the central and current topics of child protection. The next, fourth, World Congress is planned to take place virtually from the 15th to 20th of November 2021, supported by the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice, under the topic of [“Access to justice for all Children: towards non-discriminatory and inclusive child justice systems”](#).



Policy advocacy is another strong suit of Tdh, analysing national, European, and international policies on child rights and protection and providing recommendations for their improvement. A clear example of it is Tdh coordination to develop, together with 40 children and young people in six countries in Europe, as well as 12 organisations and networks, the [JUST with children Policy Brief for the upcoming 4-year EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Tdh launched the **international campaign “[Accelerate the Release of children in detention in times of COVID-19](#)”**, calling on states to release all children from immigration detention and accelerate the release of children deprived of liberty in criminal justice or protection facilities.

[Tdh has actively contributed](#) to the [Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty](#), by collecting the views and experiences of more than 270 children from 20 countries: watch a [video](#) to find out what they wish to share with the world. The Global Study sheds light on the scale and conditions of children deprived of liberty, identifies good practices, and makes recommendations for effective measures to prevent human rights violations against children in detention and reduce the number of children deprived of liberty.

With strong partnerships, recognized expertise and over 20-year experience in child justice at global level, Tdh is committed to ensure that each and every child in Europe has equal access to non-discriminatory and inclusive justice systems.

***Terre des hommes (Tdh)** is the leading Swiss organisation for children’s aid. Through its health, protection, and emergency relief programmes, Tdh provides assistance to over four million children and their families in around 40 countries each year. Learn more: www.tdh.ch/en*

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