

# CFJ-EN NEWSLETTER

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JULY 2024



## Prioritising children's rights in turbulent times

Rain, wind, and cold weather have swept over not only Brussels, the EU capital, but also the European Elections. Amidst the current political climate, the hard-won rights of children in contact with justice systems are under threat. This is why the CFJ-EN remains committed to ensuring that their rights stay a priority on the political agenda, alongside our partners in the Child Rights Action Group.

While summer's struggling to make an appearance in the North and heatwaves are affecting the South-East of Europe, Nature reminds us that the impact of climate cannot be ignored any longer. It's increasingly urgent to engage in effective discussions about how environmental challenges and climate change affect children's access to justice.

The recent Portuguese ECtHR case highlights that children and young people in Europe will not stop at their countries' borders to make their rights heard by European courts. So it's timely that climate experts and children's rights experts will be gathering this year at our Annual Seminar in Brussels on 10-11 October, to propose and discuss actionable solutions for the benefit of children.

In the meantime, our members have been active in producing high-quality information about violence against children in detention and specialised services for children in migration. As we hope for better weather across Europe, we wish you a peaceful and reflective summer.

*Mariama Diallo, CFJ-EN Coordinator*



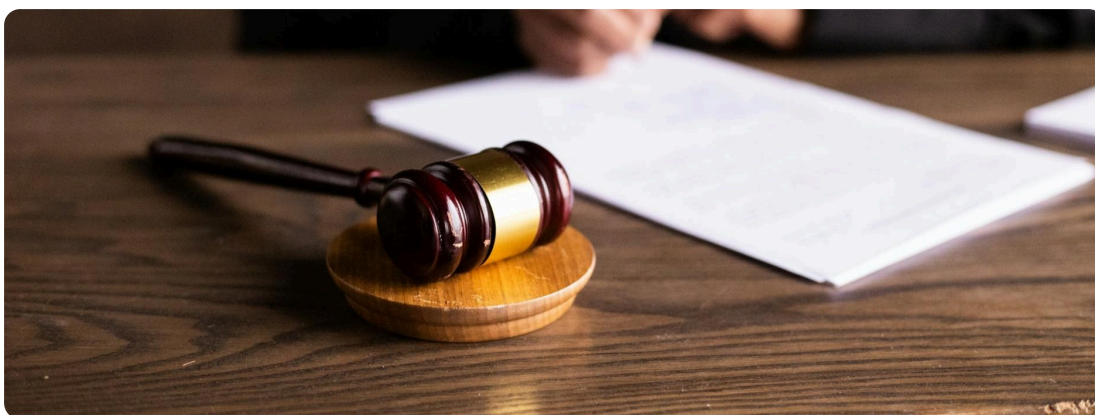
## Policy update

The CFJ-EN is proud to have been part of the [#VoteForChildren campaign](#), which called on EU election candidates to sign a "Child Rights Manifesto" and prioritise children's rights.

Central to our campaign is ensuring meaningful, inclusive, and safe participation of children in all EU legislative processes and debates that concern them. The manifesto also addresses critical issues like education, mental health, bullying, and violence prevention.

By supporting this initiative, we can help future members of the European Parliament commit to a child-centred EU budget and support access to justice for all children.

[Find out more](#)



## Case law

### **ECtHR case of Duarte Agostinho and Others v. Portugal and 32 Others (2024) : Children take Portugal to Court about Paris Agreement**

The case concerned the greenhouse gas emissions from 33 member States including all 27 European Union member states, the UK, Turkey, Russia, and Norway, which in the applicants' view contribute to the phenomenon of global warming resulting in heatwaves affecting the applicants' living conditions and health. Notably, the applicants are Portuguese nationals aged between 11 and 24. The ECtHR declared the complaint to be inadmissible against Portugal on the basis that the applicants had not exhausted domestic legal remedies prior to their application to the ECtHR.

[Read the court press release](#)

### **ECtHR case of Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland (2024)**

The case concerned a complaint by four women and a Swiss association, Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz, whose members are all older women concerned about the consequences of global warming on their living conditions and health. They consider that the Swiss authorities are not taking sufficient action, despite their duties under the Convention, to mitigate the effects of climate change. The Court held, by a majority of sixteen votes to one, that there had and, unanimously, that there had been: a violation of

Article 6 § 1 (access to court). The case underscores the intergenerational equity aspect of climate justice, as older generations seek to protect their own rights and those of future generations by demanding stronger climate action.

[Read the court press release](#)

## Annual Seminar 2024



### Early bird tickets available till 20th July - grab yours now!

Don't miss out on our Annual Seminar happening from 10-11 October in Brussels! This year's theme is "How Climate Change Affects Children's Access to Justice."

[Book your ticket](#)

## CFJ-EN in action



### Benoît Van Keirsbilck re-elected to the UNCRC

We are delighted to announce that Benoît Van Keirsbilck, President of CFJ-EN, has been re-elected to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. This re-election is a testament to his unwavering dedication to promoting and protecting children's rights.

A heartfelt thank you to the UNCRC States Parties for their strong support.

Benoît, who also serves as the Director of Défense des Enfants International - ECPAT- Belgium, will continue his vital work in advocating for children's rights both in Belgium and globally.

Congratulations, Benoît!





## UN : Access to information on climate change and human rights

CFJ-EN has submitted several recommendations to the UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change, Elisa Morgera, for [her forthcoming report](#) on access to information regarding climate change and human rights.

Drawing on policy briefs published by [Terre des hommes Foundation](#), [Advancing Child Rights Strategic Litigation](#), and other sources, CFJ-EN's contribution focused on improving children's access to information in the context of climate change.

The recommendations included:

- Ensuring a **child-centred approach** when addressing the impact of climate change on children.
- Guaranteeing that children affected by climate change have **effective access to justice** and legal remedies.
- Developing materials about climate change that are **accessible and understandable** to children.
- Ensuring all children, without discrimination, have **effective and easy access to information** about their rights and climate change.
- Reinforcing **integrated support systems** and providing **free legal assistance** for children affected by climate change.
- Offering **training** programmes for practitioners working with children affected by climate change.
- Developing **awareness-raising** initiatives for policymakers on children's rights and climate change.
- Ensuring the **thoughts and opinions of children** on climate change are effectively sought and heard.
- **Collecting disaggregated data** on the actual and potential harm from climate change on children, particularly vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, Roma children, children in conflict, and children living in poverty.

We take this opportunity to congratulate Professor Elisa Morgera on her recent appointment and look forward to her appearance as the keynote speaker at our [Annual Seminar](#) in October (to be confirmed).

## Recent Events



### **Estonia : CFJ-EN meets young Estonians to discuss restorative justice**

In May CFJ-EN Coordinator Mariama Diallo went to Tallinn to meet young people from the Estonian Child Advisory Board. It was part of the EU-funded [i-Restore 2.0 project](#) led by Terre des hommes Foundation in Romania.

Co-moderated with youth facilitator Sandra Sutting, the session featured impactful testimonies from young individuals with lived experience of the justice system.

The young people's heartfelt stories underscored the urgent need for empathetic approaches in justice systems. Adults need to listen without judgment and to understand children's unique needs.

This exchange highlighted the importance of child-friendly justice and the role of restorative practices.

Special thanks to Sandra Sutting, Annegrete Johanson and the [European Forum for Restorative Justice](#) for making it happen!



### **Sweden : CBSS conference on child trafficking**

Members of our team attended the "[Child Trafficking - Justice, Healing and Protection](#)" conference on 1 June in Stockholm. This event, hosted by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), focussed on creating stronger systems to combat child trafficking.

Our President, Benoît Van Keirsbilck, shared insights on the work of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, of which he is a member. Our Coordinator, Mariama Diallo, was rapporteur of the "Child-centred procedures" workshop.

The conference emphasised the need for collaboration between governments and organisations like the EU and OSCE. This united front is crucial to improve child protection programmes and prevent trafficking across Europe.



## Croatia : VSE conference "The Bridge over Troubled Water"

Our Advocacy Officer, Lotte Buekenhout, and our Vice-President, Nantina Tsekeri, recently attended the ["The Bridge over Troubled Water" conference](#) organised by [Victim Support Europe \(VSE\)](#) in Zagreb, Croatia. This conference, held in May, provided a platform to discuss critical issues in victim support, specifically relevant to our work when it comes to youth participation and access to justice for victims.

Workshops focused on the advocacy environment for victims' rights, preventing secondary victimisation, and best practices in supporting child victims. Key takeaways included the importance of a sustainable victim-centred approach, comprehensive advocacy tailored to individual needs, and building strong partnerships for systemic change.

These insights will inform our ongoing work and upcoming publication, "Protecting the Rights of Child Victims in Europe: A Holistic Approach."

## Members' corner



### Europe : Enhancing data collection to prevent violence against children in detention facilities

From 21-23 May, the Data Mosaic EU Advocacy Meeting in Madrid brought together European child justice leaders and policymakers to shape a trans-national advocacy strategy.



### Belgium: Exhibition on military detention of Palestinian children

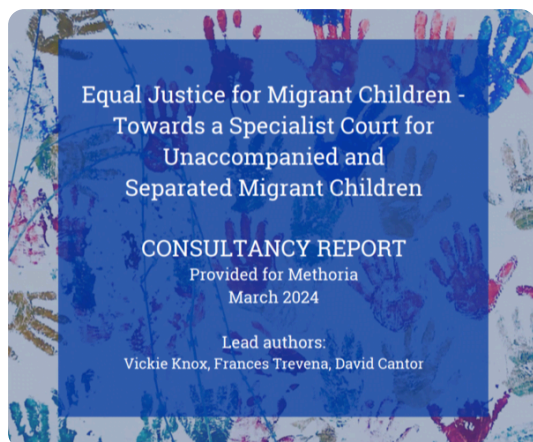
The exhibition, "Military Detention: No Way to Treat a Child" was held at the Bourse in Brussels from 7-16 June, 2024. This event, organised by Defence for Children International (DCI) Palestine in collaboration with Défense des Enfants International -



The event featured interactive sessions with children and experts to improve data collection and ensure meaningful child participation.

It began with a presentation on the Data Mosaic project's monitoring tool, followed by strategic discussions. An interactive session on day two vividly illustrated the experiences and challenges children face within various public systems. Finally, a "Sprint for Justice" workshop linked child detention issues to climate change hazards.

Special thanks to CFJ-EN members [Penal Reform International](#), [Terre des Hommes Romania](#), [SAPI](#) and Silvia Randazzo for their collaboration. Findings will be presented at the World Congress on Justice With Children.



## UK : Towards a Specialist Court for Unaccompanied and Separated Migrant Children

Methoria recently published its report [Equal Justice for Migrant Children: Towards a Specialist Court for Unaccompanied and Separated Migrant Children](#).

The report outlines how a child-friendly and trauma-informed process – with input from a multidisciplinary team which treats young people with respect and pays attention to their vulnerabilities – has the potential to lead to better, right-first-time, decision making.

ECPAT-Belgium and Broederlijk Delen was open to the public.

The trilingual exhibition (FR, NL, EN) aimed to highlight the military detention of Palestinian children by Israel and raise awareness about the severe violations of children's rights in Palestine.

[Read about the exhibition here \(in French\)](#).



## Global : Child Justice at the High-Level Political Forum

CFJ-EN member, the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures at the University of Strathclyde, will be leading the second annual Side Event at the UN High-Level Political Forum on 10 July 2024, in New York City.

This year's theme, "SDG16: Accelerating Progress to Achieve Justice for Children - Leveraging Innovations to Close the Justice Gap," promises to deliver insightful discussions on pioneering strategies to advance child-centred justice.

The event will feature a hybrid attendance option from 10:00-11:00 AM (EDT) to accommodate global participants.



The model builds upon rights acquired under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and offers potential for a model of justice that is transferable to other jurisdictions.

For more details and to register, please [visit the Side Event webpage](#).

Ann Skelton, Chair of the CRC Committee, expressed strong support for this model court at a recent meeting to launch the report where she spoke powerfully on the needs of migrant children.

## Meet the team



### Introducing our new recruits: Paige, Hannah, Eleanor and Teresa

**Paige Fishman** (left), a student at Columbia Law School in New York, joins us as an intern for the summer. She will be working in particular on our handbook on children's justice and climate change. She studied Urban Studies, Law and Society at University of Pennsylvania, and has worked as a paralegal at international law firm Paul Weiss.

**Eleanor Mears** (centre), communication officer for CFJ-EN, joined our team in April 2024. She has an extensive background in journalism and media production, having worked for outlets including the BBC, Politico and Deutsche Welle. In 2023, she transitioned to web development, focusing on user experience and accessibility.

**Teresa Schepis** (right), assistant coordinator intern at CFJ-EN, holds degrees in Sociology and Criminology from Gabriele D'Annunzio University and a Master's in Criminology from Birmingham City University. She joined DEI

Belgium in March 2024 and has experience working with children in contact with the justice system.

**Hannah Kuriakose** is a law student from the University of Michigan Law School, working as a legal intern for CFJ-EN this summer. In pursuit of studying International Law, she is excited to work on CFJ-EN's Strategic Litigation and Mapping Child-Friendly Justice projects, focusing on the EU. Hannah graduated from the University of Michigan with bachelor's degrees in International Studies, Environmental Studies, and Writing.

**Child Friendly Justice  
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