

ENOC 27th Annual Conference
Brussels, Belgium

The strength of Independent Children's
Rights Institutions: upholding children's
rights in Europe

19 – 20 September 2023 - ENOC Annual Conference

21 September 2023 - ENOC Annual General Assembly

Conference Venue:

Flemish Parliament

(IJzerenkruis(straat) 99 – Rue de la Croix de Fer 99 – Bezoekerscentrum Vlaams Parlement – Brussels)



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'Children should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that [they] can fully assume [their] responsibilities within the community'¹

It is widely known that children's complete enjoyment of their rights is crucial to their full and harmonious development. However, children are sometimes not aware of their rights and are always under the responsibility, authority, and agreement of their caregivers. To successfully promote and protect children's rights, consideration of their best interests and opinions on issues that affect them is not sufficient. This year's ENOC Annual Conference will indeed focus on how Independent Children's Rights Institutions (ICRIs) in Europe can Protect and Promote children's rights to the fullest extent, by simultaneously taking into consideration their starting point and possible developments from different perspectives.

The Annual Conference will conclude ENOC's annual activities on the topic, which involved collaborative work from the experts, ENOC members, and the young people participating in the European Network of Young Advisors (ENYA). All the insights from these parallel activities are going to be presented and discussed at the Conference, and then reflected in the relevant ENOC policy statement to be endorsed by the ENOC General Assembly.

The research carried out by the experts provides useful findings for ICRIs to self-examine and discover what powers they can strengthen to ensure their independence, effectiveness, their visibility and accessibility to children, as well as the meaningful participation of children and young people in their work. Such findings will be paired with the expectations of the Young Advisors, who will share their policy recommendations as adopted during the ENYA Forum in July 2023. How ought ICRIs to be? What powers should they have to ensure they effectively monitor, protect and promote children's rights? What can they do to make themselves more visible, efficient, and accessible to all children from diverse backgrounds? Their insights will be presented at the Annual Conference, and included in the ENOC's 2023 position statement, which the ENOC General Assembly will endorse on 21 September 2023.

Ombudspersons and Commissioners for Children from across Europe and beyond are expected to attend, as are representatives of key European and International Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations, governmental authorities, professionals, experts, and other stakeholders working in the children's rights field.

¹ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 – Preamble.

Day 1

19 September 2023

8.30-9.00

Security screening (airport-style)

9.00-9.30

ID checks, Conference Registration & Refreshments

9.30-10.00

Welcoming & Opening Session

Moderator: Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair-Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner, and Conference host

Speakers:

- Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair-Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner
- Liesbeth Homans, President of the Flemish Parliament
- Salvör Nordal, ENOC Chair, Ombudsman for Children, Iceland
- Ewa Kopacz, European Parliament Vice-President and EP Coordinator on the Rights of the Child

10.00-11.00

ENYA 2023

"Let's Talk Young, Let's Talk about Protecting and Promoting Children's Rights"

Speakers:

- ENYA delegates
- Suzanne Garcia Imbernon, ENYA 2023 General Coordinator

11.00-11.30

Coffee Break

16.00-16.20

Coffee Break

16.20-16.35

Video message UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Speakers:

- Prof. Ann Skelton - Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
- Benoit Van Keirsbilck - Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

16.35-17.15

The Impact of ICRIs in Safeguarding Children's Rights Worldwide

Speaker:

- Geert Cappelaere, former UNICEF Representative to the EU institutions, and former Director of UNICEF Partnership Office, Brussels

17.15-17.30

Wrap-up of Day 1

- Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner

18.30-01.00

Dinner & Dance

Address: Le Cercle des voyageurs - Lievevrouwbroersstraat 18 – Brussels

Day 2

20 September 2023

8.30-9.00 **Security screening (airport-style)**

9.00-9.30 **ID checks & Refreshments**

Moderator: Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair-Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner

9.30-10.00 **Day 2 Opening session**

Speakers:

- Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair-Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner
- Benjamin Dalle, Flemish Minister for Brussels, Youth, Media, Poverty reduction and coordinating minister for children's rights

10.00-11.30 **ENYA Recommendations on the role of ICRIs**

Speakers:

- ENYA delegates
- Suzanne Garcia Imbernon, ENYA 2023 General Coordinator

11.30-12.00 *Coffee Break*

12.00-12.30 **ENOC 2023 Research: Presentation of the main Challenges for ICRIs**

Speakers:

- Prof. Ursula Kilkelly, University College Cork
- Dr. Katrien Klep, Leiden University

12.30-12.45 **Protecting and Promoting Children's Rights in times of war**

Speaker:

- Olga Altunina, Representative of the Commissioner for the Rights of Citizens Affected by Armed Aggression Against Ukraine

12.45-14.00

Lunch

14.00-15.30

Workshops on Participation, Monitoring, and Accessibility & Visibility

Speakers:

- Jan Raymaekers, Coordinator, Flemish Youth Council – **Workshop ‘Participation’**
- Prof. Ursula Kilkelly & Dr. Katrien Klep – **Workshop ‘Monitoring’**
- Sibille Declercq, Director, Awel, hotline for children – **Workshop ‘Accessibility & Visibility’**

Moderators:

- Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children, Ireland
- Andres Aru, Head of Children’s and Youth Rights Department, Office of the Chancellor of Justice, Estonia
- Theoni Koufonikolakou, Ombudswoman for Children’s Rights, Greece

15.30-15.50

Coffee Break

CONFERENCE CLOSURE



General Assembly pre-session (only for ENOC members)

16.15-17.00

Discussion on ENOC’s Position Statement

18.30-20.30

Guided City Walk by VIZIT

Meeting Point: Warande Park (Metro station ‘Park’), Kiosk Radio

Day 3

ENOC 27th Annual General Assembly

21 September 2023

9.00-9.30 Security screening (airport-style)

9.30-10.00 ID checks, General Assembly Registration & Refreshments

Moderator: Salvör Nordal, ENOC Chair (2022-2023), Ombudsman for Children, Iceland

10.00-11.30 Presentation of ENOC annual activities
Presentation and approval of ENOC annual accounts
Election of the new Bureau 2023-2024

11.30-11.45 Coffee & Refreshments

Moderator: Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair (2023-2024), Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner

11.45-13.00 Endorsement of ENOC position statement
Appointment of the ENYA 2024 coordination office
Brainstorming on ENOC 2025 annual focus
Any other issue raised by members

13.00-14.00 Lunch

END

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