


# CHILDREN AS DEFENDERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS: A STUDY ON COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEMBER STATES



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# WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

This is the first ever study in Europe that looks into the situation of child human rights defenders (CHRDs), who are children standing up for their human rights or the human rights of others. If you want to check out the whole study, you can do it [here](#).



# WHO WROTE THIS STUDY?

The study was written by Child Rights Connect, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and it was approved by its member states.



Child Rights Connect is an independent, non-profit organisation founded in 1983 which is today one of the largest international child rights networks with more than 100 member and observer organisations.

The Council of Europe is a European organisation of 46 countries, called member states. It was set up to make sure that all these countries protect human rights, including children's rights, by supporting children and young people to develop their full potential, and by preventing any harm.



# HOW WAS THE INFORMATION FOR THIS STUDY COLLECTED?

The information was gathered from 3 sources:

- o Already published books and reports about child human rights defenders.
- o Replies from 20 governments of member states who replied to questions about the situation of child human rights defenders.
- o Replies from 85 children from different European countries who replied to an online survey and took part in online consultations.



# WHAT CAN WE READ ABOUT IN THIS STUDY?



All the legal documents related to the situation of child human rights defenders from international and European level.



How the Constitutions and the national laws of the countries define child human rights defenders and their rights.



The procedures available for child human rights defenders if their rights are violated or they need protection from harm.

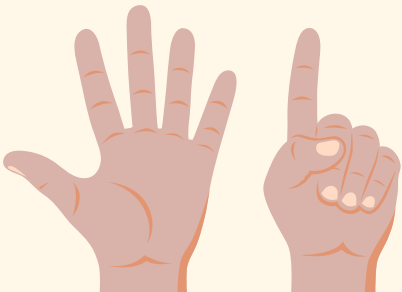
# WHAT CAN WE READ ABOUT IN THIS STUDY?



The places and occasions where children can learn about child human rights defenders, for example at school or in their free time, and about trainings for professionals who work with children.



Examples where and how child human rights defenders can get money for their projects and activities.



How the different governments follow the situation of child human rights defenders and collect information about them, for example for research.



Obstacles and challenges faced by child human rights defenders based on the personal experience of the children.



# WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND OUT?

Both children and some of the governments said that children are excluded from important decisions, or they are not taken seriously when they speak.

The national human rights institutions, Children's Commissioners or Ombudspersons are important partners of children and they run great programmes for them. Only few countries have other bodies or programmes to protect child human rights defenders from harm.

Human rights education is taught at schools, but only some of the countries include topics about child human rights defenders. The children who participated in the research said they would like to learn more about these topics.

Child human rights defenders would need more support from adults, including guidance and money.

Most of the countries have age restrictions so children cannot go to court without their parents. In general it is difficult for children to find information about how to go to court or how to find a lawyer.





# WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND OUT?



Children do not participate systematically in public decision-making or not in a meaningful way.

Despite that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and children's rights are part of the national laws in every European country, children still face difficulties exercising them because of age restrictions or practical problems.

The governments said that they would need support from the Council of Europe, for example to train the adults who work with CHRDs.

Children shared several personal stories when they get into trouble or get intimidated because of their activities as CHRDs, and when they stand up for human rights.



# WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS STUDY?



1. Children's rights should be an angle used for national laws on human rights defenders, at the same time, laws on children's rights should include the rights and protection of child human rights defenders.


2. Children should be able to participate in the preparation and update of the laws and policies of their countries.

3. National platforms for child participation can be a good way to engage with children so there should be more of them.

4. Children's Commissioners, Ombudspersons and other bodies supporting and protecting child human rights defenders should be made stronger. Information about them need to be made available in a child-friendly language.




5. Any restriction on civil and political rights that can affect child human rights defenders should be lifted and children should be able to participate in civil society organisations.




6. If their rights are violated, children should be able to go to court and seek justice on their own right. This means that their parents can support them, but it is not a condition to go to court.


# WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS STUDY?




7. Everyone around child human rights defenders should learn more about them, their rights and their needs for support and protection.



8. Governments should put aside some money to support child human rights defenders and they should decide about the use of this money in consultation with children.



9. Governments should collect information about the situation of child human rights defenders without infringing their privacy but including information about their background and vulnerabilities.



10. Governments should follow the work of international organisations in relation to child human rights defenders and make good use of their recommendations at national level.

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