



CHILD

Towards a child-friendly justice

Policy Recommendations

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Women's Support and
Information Center
There is a way out of violence!

Recommendations

1. National

- Development and phased implementation of a coherent, nationwide strategy to establish Barnahus-style centres in Austria, bringing together forensic interviews, medical examinations, psychosocial care and legal support in a single location, in order to minimise trauma, improve the outcomes of criminal proceedings and prioritise the best interests of the child.
- Introduction of uniform, child-centred procedural standards across the country, including standardised interviewing methods, video interviews and measures to prevent repeated interviews and secondary victimisation.
- Introduction of mandatory, nationwide training and professional development standards for the police, the judiciary, experts, child and youth welfare services and other relevant professional groups on children's rights, trauma, dynamics of violence and child-centred communication.
- Strengthening children's procedural rights and participation, in particular through age-appropriate information, effective consultation and guaranteed access to trusted adults, as well as psychosocial and legal support.
- Expanding and ensuring the long-term provision of trauma-informed support and protection services, including psychosocial, psychological and legal support for all affected children.
- Improving protection for particularly vulnerable groups through specialised protection mechanisms and targeted support measures, particularly for unaccompanied refugee children and victims of child trafficking.
- National prevention and awareness-raising campaigns on violence against children and its consequences.
- Ensuring sufficient financial and human resources for child protection, victim protection and prevention.

2. Regional

- Expansion of child-friendly interviewing and support structures in all federal states, including specialised interviewing centres with standardised audiovisual equipment, suitable premises and uniform quality standards.
- Ensuring equal access to support and protection services, in particular by expanding psychosocial, therapeutic and legal support services, as well as specialised protection and accommodation facilities for particularly vulnerable children and young people – regardless of place of residence or region.
- Strengthening regional interdisciplinary cooperation through binding cooperation structures, regular case conferences and networking between the police, the judiciary, child and youth welfare services, the health service, educational institutions and victim support organisations, as well as through regional training programmes for professionals.

3. Local

- Improving case coordination and inter-institutional cooperation at local level to prevent information gaps, reduce repeated questioning and ensure continuous support for affected children.
- Providing early and low-threshold psychosocial support, including child-friendly counselling services, and involving schools, nurseries and childcare facilities in protection and support processes.
- Strengthening child-centred participation and the provision of information to children, through age-appropriate explanations of their rights, procedures and support services, as well as by actively taking their perspectives into account in decisions that affect them.
- Creating child-centred interview and counselling settings, including safe spaces and the use of audio-visually recorded interviews, to minimise distress for affected children as far as possible.

4. General

- Strengthening a coherent national framework for child protection and victims' rights that better links existing legal standards and ensures their uniform implementation across all federal states.
- Improving inter-institutional governance structures to ensure binding cooperation between the judiciary, the police, child and youth welfare services, the health sector and the education sector at federal and state level.
- Long-term and earmarked funding for child protection and victim support structures, in particular for specialist facilities, psychosocial support during legal proceedings and Barnahus-style models.
- Strengthening the evidence base and research on violence against children and domestic violence/intimate partner violence, in particular regarding the effects of repeated questioning, barriers to access and regional disparities.
- Promoting a sustainable cultural shift towards a consistently child-rights- and trauma-sensitive understanding of the system across all relevant institutions (justice, police, education, health, social services).
- Ensuring non-discriminatory access to protection and support services, particularly for especially vulnerable groups (e.g. unaccompanied minors, migrants, children in precarious living situations).
- Greater integration of children's rights and the perspectives of those affected into legislation, evaluation and reform processes, in order to continuously improve the effectiveness of measures.

CHILD highlight 1.

The most cross-cutting priority identified is the need to prevent system-induced secondary victimisation of children. Responses consistently highlight that fragmented procedures, repeated interviews, insufficient coordination between services, and the absence of standardised protocols contribute to additional trauma. There is a strong consensus on the importance of establishing integrated, multidisciplinary Barnahus-like structures and child-friendly, standardised interviewing methods that minimise the number of interviews and ensure coherent, trauma-informed procedures across all regions.

CHILD highlight.

A second key priority is the institutionalisation of mandatory, continuous, and multidisciplinary training and harmonised operational standards for all professionals involved. Stakeholders emphasise that police officers, judges, prosecutors, social workers, and other relevant professionals require shared training on children's rights, trauma, and violence dynamics. Strengthening interagency cooperation, developing common procedures, and ensuring consistent implementation nationwide are seen as essential to guarantee equitable, child-sensitive, and coherent protection and support for all child victims.