



CHILD

Towards a child-friendly justice

Policy Recommendations at national level

Portugal

June 2026



Co-funded by
the European Union



uc3m

Universidad
Carlos III
de Madrid



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

Recommendations

1. National

These policy recommendations are based on the findings of the CHILD project, including literature review, focus groups, interviews, discussions with stakeholders, reviews with advisory board and implementation of training and case management sessions with professionals. The following recommendations seek to support the practical implementation of child-friendly justice by proposing realistic and evidence-based measures at both national and regional levels.

1.1. Strengthen forensic interview

- Forensic interviewing should become a strategic priority to improve within the Portuguese justice system.
- Statutory deadlines should be introduced to ensure that Declarações para Memória Futura are conducted as early as possible following disclosure, minimising delays that may compromise both the child's well-being and the quality of the evidence.
- Portugal should formally adopt evidence-based forensic interview protocols, such as the NICHD Protocol, as the national standard for interviewing child victims.
- The current role of the *técnicospecialmentehabilitado* should also be revised. Rather than acting solely as technical support to the judge, this specialised professional should conduct the interview directly, while the judge defines beforehand the evidentiary objectives and the key issues requiring clarification. This approach would ensure that interviews are led by professionals with specialised expertise in child development, trauma and child communication, while preserving judicial oversight.
- Before the forensic interview, the child should be familiarised with the professionals involved and the interview environment. A pre-interview orientation should allow the child to meet the professionals, become acquainted with the interview room and understand, in an age-appropriate manner, what will happen during the interview.
- Minimum national standards should also be established regarding interview facilities and audiovisual recording equipment.

- Equip courts with dedicated interview rooms, observation facilities and high-quality audio-visual recording systems.
- Enable remote observation of forensic interviews by judges, lawyers and other procedural actors without direct visual contact with the child.
- Ensure equivalent technical conditions across all judicial districts to reduce territorial inequalities in access to child-friendly justice.
- Professional specialisation should be further strengthened through mandatory accreditation, continuous training, professional supervision and peer-review mechanisms for all professionals conducting forensic interviews.

The quality of children's testimony depends on timely forensic interviews conducted by accredited professionals using evidence-based protocols in appropriately equipped child-friendly environments.

1.2. Strengthen governance and multidisciplinary coordination

- Portugal should adopt a National Strategy for Child-Friendly Justice, supported by a National Action Plan with clearly defined objectives, measurable indicators, implementation timelines and regular evaluation. Such a strategy should promote a coordinated response across the justice system, law enforcement, healthcare, education, child protection services and victim support organisations, ensuring that child victims receive consistent protection irrespective of where they enter the system.
- The nationwide implementation of the Barnahus model should constitute one of the central priorities of this strategy. Although its implementation has already been announced, the model has not yet been effectively operationalised in Portugal. Child victims should be able to access forensic interviews, medical examinations, psychological support and judicial procedures within a single multidisciplinary and child-friendly environment, reducing repeated interventions and preventing secondary victimisation.

- National legislation should also establish binding interagency protocols defining referral pathways, institutional responsibilities, confidentiality rules and timelines for intervention. A designated case coordinator should accompany each child throughout the judicial process, ensuring continuity of care, facilitating communication between institutions and preventing fragmented interventions.
- Strengthen coordination between criminal courts and family courts to ensure that child protection measures and judicial decisions are consistent across proceedings. Information-sharing mechanisms, joint case management protocols and coordinated decision-making should be established to prevent contradictory rulings regarding parental responsibilities and to avoid unnecessary repeated hearings of child victims.
- Develop a mandatory national interdisciplinary training and accreditation framework for all professionals working with child victims of violence. Joint training should bring together professionals from the justice system, law enforcement, healthcare, education, social services and victim support organisations, promoting a common understanding of child-friendly justice and strengthening multidisciplinary cooperation. Training should include child development, trauma-informed practice, forensic interviewing, communication with children, children's rights, risk assessment and the prevention of secondary victimisation. Continuous professional development, practical simulation exercises, periodic recertification and professional supervision should be incorporated to ensure consistent, high-quality practice across all sectors.
- Finally, sustainable public funding should be secured to guarantee the long-term functioning of specialised child protection services and multidisciplinary structures, avoiding dependence on temporary funding mechanisms.

A child-friendly justice system cannot rely on individual good practice. It requires national leadership, coordinated governance and binding standards to ensure that every child receives the same level of protection across Portugal.

1.3 Strengthening Child Protection and Victim Support Services

- Expand the geographical coverage and eligibility criteria of Psychological Support Responses (RAP) to all child victims of violence.

- Guarantee multidisciplinary support extending beyond psychological assistance, including legal, healthcare, educational and social support.
- Ensure long-term follow-up and post-interview support adapted to children's evolving needs.
- Revise parental consent requirements where one holder of parental responsibility is the alleged perpetrator or where conflicts of interest exist.

Every child victim should have equitable access to integrated and specialised support services that promote recovery, participation and protection throughout the entire judicial process.

1.4 Promote quality assurance, monitoring and continuous improvement

- Portugal should establish a comprehensive monitoring framework capable of evaluating both the implementation and the quality of child-friendly justice. National indicators should include, among others, waiting times for forensic interviews, number of interviews conducted per child, duration of proceedings, access to specialised support services, application of protection measures and indicators of secondary victimisation.
- A harmonised national data collection system should support evidence-based policy development while allowing regional comparisons and the identification of implementation gaps.
- Continuous professional quality assurance should complement these monitoring mechanisms through accreditation systems, mandatory continuing professional development, supervision and peer-review processes for professionals working with child victims.

Continuous monitoring, reliable data and quality assurance are essential to transform child-friendly justice from a legal principle into an effective reality.

Regional

Regional authorities should establish multidisciplinary coordination mechanisms between: justice; police; health; education; CPCJ; victim support organisations. Clear referral pathways should be available, including outside normal working hours

2.1 Reduce territorial inequalities through coordinated regional responses

- Regional implementation should ensure that child-friendly justice is delivered consistently throughout the country. Significant territorial disparities remain regarding access to specialised services, technical resources and multidisciplinary expertise.
- Clear local referral pathways should be established, including emergency procedures operating outside normal working hours. Regional multidisciplinary teams should be created to facilitate communication between institutions, coordinate interventions and ensure continuity of support.
- Investment should also prioritise child-friendly infrastructure in judicial districts currently lacking adequate interview rooms, observation facilities and high-quality audiovisual recording equipment

A child's access to justice should never depend on their geographical location.