

What next for protecting child rights in digital justice?

An expert dialogue on how to protect procedural rights of children in the digital age across the European Union | In person and online | 10 November 2026

Background

Across Europe, justice systems are moving or have moved online. Remote hearings, often with the child appearing by video from a detention centre or prison, promise efficiency, but safeguards designed for the courtroom do not translate easily to a screen. Children can struggle to understand what is happening, to speak privately with their lawyer and to take part effectively in decisions that affect their lives.

The Protecting the Procedural Rights of Children in the Digital Age (PPRO-Child) project (2024–2026), funded by the European Union, set out to understand these risks and to build practical solutions. It was implemented by Penal Reform International (PRI) with Terre des Hommes Hungary, Terre des Hommes Romania and Tierra de Hombres España, in Ireland, Romania, Spain and Ukraine. Over two years, the project:

- **Listened to children and professionals.** Child-participatory research captured the experience of children who had taken part in remote hearings, alongside judges, lawyers, detention staff, social workers and psychologists.
- **Co-designed solutions.** Workshops in all four countries brought children and professionals together to design practical fixes.
- **Put them into practice.** Ireland: a remote hearings operating procedure for Oberstown Children Detention Campus, approved by its Board, and a redesign of the remote hearing room by DLR Group, now with the Irish Government for costing. Romania: a checklist and training for new magistrates with the National Institute of Magistracy. Spain: a rights-based checklist and user guide. Ukraine: practical memos for practitioners.
- **Set out what good practice looks like.** A 10-point plan on remote hearings sets out core safeguards. The new toolkit (guidelines for practitioners, civil society, and children and young people) and an EU policy briefing will be launched at this event.

Purpose of this expert dialogue: looking ahead

We now have findings, guidelines and tested tools. This event uses them as a starting point rather than an end point, asking what it will take for children's rights to keep pace as justice goes digital. Together, we will:

- **Reflect honestly** on what worked, how to ensure scale up and also ask what could be improved in similar initiatives in future.
- **Connect the results to new standards and policy,** including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's newly adopted General Comment No. 27 on access to justice and effective remedies, and the European Commission's priorities.
- **Look over the horizon** at the challenges coming next, from children accused of online offending to AI, neurotechnology and 'smart prisons'.
- **Agree what happens next:** where advocacy should focus, which gaps need further work, and who is best placed to take the guidelines forward.

This dialogue brings together Judges, lawyers, prison and detention staff, children's rights experts, UN and EU representatives, and NGOs from Ireland, Romania, Spain and Ukraine.

Overview

Venue	Baker McKenzie offices in Brussels: Bolwerklaan 21 Avenue du Boulevard, 1210 Brussels, Belgium
Online participation	Via Zoom (link sent to online participants)
Language / interpretation	Simultaneous interpretation Spanish–English (plenary sessions)

Tuesday 10 November 2026 (all times CET/ Brussels)

Time	Session	Speaker(s)
09:00–09:30	Registration and coffee (online link opens at 09:15)	—
09:30–09:45	Welcome and opening	Olivia Rope, Executive Director, PRI
09:45–10:15	**Keynote:** Justice on screen: General Comment No. 27 and children's access to justice in the online world *What the newly adopted General Comment on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies means for digital proceedings. Followed by Q&A.*	Benoit Van Keirsbilck, Member, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

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10:15–10:25	**PPRO-Child in brief:** objectives and the project journey *A short introduction to what the project set out to do and how its activities built on each other: from child-participatory research and national roundtables, through co-design with professionals and Child Advisory Boards, to the four pilots and the toolkit launched today*	Olivia Rope, Executive Director, PRI Barclay Wohlstetter, Project Coordinator, PRI
10:25–10:55	Coffee break	—
10:55–12:05	**Guided panel discussion** **From co-design to practice: piloting solutions** in Ireland, Romania, Spain and Ukraine *A guided conversation with project coordinators and national stakeholders on how each solution was co-designed, including with the Child Advisory Boards, how it was tested in practice, the challenges and obstacles along the way, and what each partner would do differently. Followed by Q&A.*	Mihai Enache, Terre des hommes Romania and Laura Andrei, Bucharest Court of Appeal – judge. Elina Shyshkina, Terre des hommes in Ukraine and Oleksandr Baranov, Head of the Coordination Center of Free Legal Aid Provision Mariana Pérez-Cruz, and Issamar Reymundo, Tierra de hombres Spain Barclay Wohlstetter, PRI and Yvette Ennis, Oberstown Moderator: Albana Izeti, Regional Access to Justice Coordinator – Europe Hub
12:05–12:25	Launch of a **new toolkit** on protecting child rights in digital age	Oscar O'Mara, Consultant for PRI Barclay Wohlstetter, PRI
12:25–13.00	**Policy briefing** Children in digital justice: Protecting procedural rights from digital offences to remote hearings *Followed by moderated discussion*	Cedric Foussard, Child Friendly Justice Network Mariana Pérez-Cruz, Children's Rights Expert
13:00-14.00	Lunch	—

Time	Session	Speaker(s)
14:00–14:30	**Keynote:** Fair trial rights for children in digitalised justice: the role of judges and lawyers *Followed by Q&A.*	Professor Margaret Satterthwaite, UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers
14:30–15:05	**Scenario lab:** testing the guidelines and information learned *As a group, participants work through a short case study of a child facing a remote hearing and test how the piloted tools and the new guidelines would apply. What hasn't been covered that needs to be?*	
15:05–15:20	**Where is next for the EU?** Trends and priorities for taking children's rights in digital justice forward	Tania Schroeter, Deputy Head of Unit, Procedural Criminal Law, DG JUSTICE, European Commission
15:20–15:35	Coffee break	—
15:35–16:15	**The next frontier – emerging technologies and children's rights** *An open-format conversation on the challenges coming next. Speakers open with short reflections on how AI, neurotechnology and 'smart prisons' could affect children in contact with the justice system; participants are then invited to take a seat at the panel and join the discussion.*	Kate Fox, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - neurotechnology and other emerging technologies Pia Puolakka, MindTech – smart prisons and children Manu Krishan, Global Campus of Human Rights - emerging technologies within child justice systems ***Participants… welcome to join to share trends, observations and recommendations***
16:15–16:30	Conclusions and next steps: what we will take forward	