

Regional Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Europe and Central Asia

Narrative report document

13-14 October 2025

Bucharest, Romania

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Acronyms

DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (European Commission)
EC	European Commission
ECARO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (UNICEF)
EU	European Union
OSRSG VAC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children
P.I.P.P.I.	Programma di Intervento Per la Prevenzione dell'Istituzionalizzazione (Italy)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TransMonEE	Transnational Monitoring and Evaluation Database (UNICEF)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAC	Violence Against Children

Executive Summary



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In October 2025, high-level government representatives, regional institutions, technical experts, civil society and children gathered in Bucharest for the Regional Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Europe and Central Asia.

Convened by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity of Romania in partnership with UNICEF and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, the conference marked a key regional milestone in translating the global commitments made in Bogotá in 2024 into concrete, coordinated and measurable action.

Despite progress in legal frameworks and child protection systems, violence against children remains widespread, normalised and

significantly underreported. Nearly one in three children aged 1 to 14 experiences physical punishment at home, while many are exposed to psychological violence, sexual abuse, bullying, harmful practices and online exploitation. These risks are intensified by intersecting crises, including conflict, displacement, economic hardship, technological change and transnational crime. The cost of inaction is profound, affecting children's development, social cohesion, economic productivity and intergenerational wellbeing.

A consistent message from political leaders, practitioners and children themselves was the urgent need to move faster from commitments to implementation. Children cannot wait while incremental progress leaves them exposed to continued harm in their homes, schools, communities and online spaces.

Executive Summary ...continued



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The conference outcomes reflected a strong renewal of political leadership and accountability. Ministers and heads of delegation reaffirmed that ending violence against children is a regional political priority and a non-negotiable child rights obligation. Governments presented strengthened and new national commitments spanning legislative reform, child-friendly justice, digital protection, statutory family support and violence prevention in schools. These pledges underscored a collective responsibility to move beyond declarations towards sustained, coordinated and adequately financed action. Participants agreed that fragmented responses are insufficient. Throughout the conference, there was a strong emphasis on building integrated child protection systems linking prevention, early intervention, justice, health, education, social protection and digital governance. Particular attention was given to scaling statutory family support to prevent unnecessary separation, expanding multidisciplinary child-friendly services including the Barnahus model, strengthening whole-school approaches to prevention, and advancing child justice reforms that prioritise diversion,

Executive Summary ...continued

rehabilitation and restoration over punishment. Children and adolescents were placed at the centre of the conference, not as symbolic participants but as active contributors and co-designers of solutions. Their inputs on cyberbullying, mental health, safe reporting mechanisms and trust in institutions shaped both discussions and outcomes. Survivor testimonies reinforced the long-term impacts of violence and the need for trauma-informed, survivor-centred systems that remove barriers to reporting, strengthen accountability and ensure long-term support for recovery and healing.

Several shared regional priorities emerged across ministerial and child commitments. Prevention through safe and nurturing families and schools was recognised as a cornerstone of sustainable change, supported by evidence-based parenting programmes, socio-emotional learning and efforts to challenge harmful social norms and gender stereotypes. Strengthening integrated child



protection systems was identified as essential, supported by sustainable financing, clear governance and professional capacity. Governments committed to expanding multidisciplinary services for victims and witnesses of violence, addressing rapidly evolving digital risks including online sexual exploitation, and improving national data systems to strengthen monitoring, transparency and accountability.

The Bucharest conference reaffirmed that ending violence against children is not only a moral and legal obligation, but also a strategic investment in human capital, social cohesion and sustainable development. Through strengthened regional cooperation and global mechanisms such as the Pathfinder Global Alliance, participating countries committed to translating political pledges into funded, measurable and accountable actions. Children's voices were clear: protection must be real, accessible and trusted. Leaders echoed that the solutions already exist and must now be scaled without delay. ■

Background & Context

The Regional Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Europe and Central Asia took place in Bucharest in response to growing concern about the scale, severity and persistence of violence against children across the region.

High-level representatives from 30 governments (Romania, Sweden, Tajikistan, Georgia, Montenegro, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Türkiye, Ukraine, Greece, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Serbia, Latvia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal, Slovakia, Albania, France, Iceland, Italy, North Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, Estonia), regional institutions, civil society, professional communities and children

were brought together by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity of Romania, in partnership with UNICEF and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence Against Children.

The conference was designed to accelerate regional progress towards ending all forms of violence against children by 2030, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. Although most countries in the region have strengthened legal and policy frameworks over the past decade, implementation remains uneven and under-resourced. Fragmentation across sectors and levels of government continues to limit the real impact of reforms on children's everyday lives.



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Background & Context ...continued

The Bucharest meeting also served as a regional follow-up to the first Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, held in Bogotá in 2024. At the global level, governments endorsed a shared Call to Action and committed to strengthening national responses. The regional conference sought to translate that momentum into focused dialogue, cooperation and practical next steps tailored to the specific challenges facing Europe and Central Asia.

Across the region, Member States have advanced important reforms, including new legislation, child-friendly justice initiatives, online safety measures, child-sensitive social protection schemes and efforts to shift away from institutional care. However, significant gaps persist between policy commitments and practice. Services remain unevenly distributed, workforce capacity is often insufficient, and coordination between systems such as justice, education, social protection and health remains inconsistent.

Recent data illustrates the scale of the challenge. In countries and territories with available data, up to 69 per cent of children aged 1 to 14 in Europe and Central Asia experience violent discipline, including physical punishment or psychological aggression. Globally, nearly 90 million children and women alive today are estimated to have experienced sexual violence during childhood. These figures underscore both the profound human cost of violence and the strong economic and social case for sustained investment in prevention and response.

Children and young people were placed at the centre of the conference design. Through the Voices of Change initiative, youth representatives from across the region presented findings from multi-country consultations with adolescents. They highlighted widespread experiences of



physical, psychological and digital violence, and called for stronger education, improved mental health support, safer reporting mechanisms, and greater trust in institutions. Their participation demonstrated that child participation was not symbolic, but a core principle of the conference process.

Speakers repeatedly stressed the urgency of moving from political commitments to concrete, scalable action. As the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence Against Children underlined, the tools and solutions already exist, but remain insufficiently scaled. The conference therefore served as a critical milestone to reinforce political will, strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation and promote sustained investment in integrated child protection systems that prevent and respond to violence, with children and young people at the centre. ■

Keynote highlights and high-level interventions

The opening and keynote interventions reflected a shared commitment to accelerating action to end violence against children across Europe and Central Asia. Together, they brought political leadership, technical expertise and lived experience into a coherent call for integrated, accountable and child-centred systems.

Speakers consistently underlined that violence against children is not an isolated social issue, but a structural failure that reflects broader inequalities, discrimination and gaps in governance. They converged around five core messages: the need to strengthen integrated child protection systems, prioritise prevention, ensure survivor-centred and trauma-informed responses, improve data and accountability, and address emerging risks, particularly in digital environments.

Petre-Florin Manole, Minister of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity of Romania, delivered a personal and political address rooted in his experience as a Roma community member and public official. He highlighted forced and underage marriage and child trafficking as persistent forms of violence sustained by harmful traditions and social tolerance. While acknowledging the difficulty of challenging practices within one's own community, he emphasised that legal and policy action must not be delayed when children's rights are at stake.

Roxana Minzatu, Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness at the European Commission, stressed that violence against children can never be justified and must be addressed through coordinated European action. She outlined key European Union initiatives, including strengthening child protection systems, revising the Victims' Rights and



Photo © UNICEF

Keynote highlights and high-level interventions ...continued



Anti-Trafficking Directives, and developing a Digital Fairness Act and an anti-cyberbullying action plan. She also referenced the impact of armed conflict on children, including the abduction of Ukrainian children and the situation in Gaza, noting the responsibility of institutions to ensure technology protects rather than harms.

Tánczos Barna, Vice Prime Minister of Romania, framed violence against children as a reflection of adult and societal failure. Speaking as both a parent and a member of an ethnic minority, he underlined how discrimination, inherited social attitudes and inequality contribute to violence. He called for long-term investment in education, social cohesion and international cooperation to change harmful mindsets and build safer environments for children.

Marius Lazurca, Presidential Counsellor to the President of Romania, described violence against children as widespread yet often invisible. Drawing on regional and global data, he highlighted the scale of underreporting and the lifelong impact of abuse. He emphasised the need to strengthen legal frameworks, reform education systems, invest in mental health support and address emerging online risks through coordinated national and international action.

Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, reflected on progress since the Bogotá Global Ministerial Conference while warning that implementation continues to lag behind political commitments. She highlighted how conflict, displacement,



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Keynote highlights..continued

technological change and organised crime are exacerbating risks for children. She called for a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approaches, stronger child participation, cross-sectoral coordination and urgent investment in child protection and well-being as well as scaling of evidence-based solutions to meet 2030 targets.

Regina De Dominicis, UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, argued that political pledges are meaningless without strong systems and sustained investment. She outlined how violence undermines children's development, mental health, education and future economic participation. She noted progress in banning corporal punishment but stressed that implementation remains weak in many contexts. She emphasised the importance of trained professionals, integrated data systems, prevention strategies and inclusive services addressing both offline and online violence.

Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Director of Child Protection and Migration, placed violence against children at the root of multiple social challenges. She outlined three priority solutions: universal parenting support, safe and supportive school environments, and accessible protection services for victims. She highlighted UNICEF's commitment to reaching 350 million children by 2029 through violence prevention and child protection programming and reinforced the need for sustained political will and accountability.

Andreea, representing the Romanian Children's Board, stressed that child participation must go beyond symbolic inclusion. She described how children and young people actively co-designed and led regional consultations and reaffirmed that children must be recognised as partners in shaping policies and solutions that affect their lives.



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The Children and Adolescents Panel, with representatives from the Romanian Children's Board and regional partner organisations, shared perspectives gathered from consultations with children aged 14 to 18 years old. They highlighted experiences of physical, psychological and sexual violence, cyberbullying, and barriers to seeking support. They called for stronger education, safe spaces, trained mental health professionals and institutions that children trust. Their message was clear: adults must listen and translate children's and young people's voices into practical reform and safer environments.

Overall, the keynote interventions underscored that leadership, systems reform and child participation must move in parallel. Symbolic statements must now be matched with sustained political commitment, institutional reform and investment at local, national and regional levels.

Evidence & Lived Experience



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This section brings together the statistical picture of violence against children in Europe and Central Asia with the lived experiences of survivors. Together, they demonstrate that violence is not only a policy challenge, but a daily reality for millions of children across the region.

Aaron Greenberg, UNICEF Regional Advisor on Child Protection, presented the core findings of UNICEF's 2025 regional analysis during the conference, grounding discussions in a robust evidence base.

The first component draws on UNICEF's 2025 regional analysis, *Where We Live and Learn: Violence Against Children in Europe and Central*

Asia. The report provides a classification-aligned overview of the scale, patterns and distribution of violence, using data from national surveys, administrative systems and the TransMonEE database. It shows that violence against children remains widespread, deeply normalised in many contexts and significantly underreported, despite progress in legislation and awareness.

For many children, the home remains the most dangerous environment. Nearly one in three children aged 1 to 14 experiences physical punishment by caregivers, while psychological aggression affects between 36 and 69 per cent of children in countries with available data. Disturbingly, violence affects children from as young as one or two years old. Disaggregated data show higher prevalence in marginalised

Peer violence and bullying are also persistent across the region. Data from 42 countries and territories indicate that around 11 per cent of children report being bullied, 7 per cent report bullying others, and approximately 10 per cent have been involved in physical fights. Online violence compounds these risks. On average, 15 per cent of children report being cyberbullied, and globally one in five internet-using children has faced online sexual exploitation or abuse. The rise of AI-generated child sexual abuse material represents a dangerous and rapidly evolving dimension of digital harm.

As he observed, when a child grows up in an environment of violence, it shapes every aspect of their development. Toxic stress undermines learning, emotional regulation and healthy attachment, with consequences that often extend into adulthood.

The report identifies three priority areas for action: strengthening protective environments through positive parenting and safe schools; reinforcing trauma-informed, child-centred response systems; and closing critical data gaps through standardised collection and reporting, including alignment with the International Classification of Violence Against Children. Without sustained political commitment and investment, the report warns, the region will continue to fall short of its obligations to its most vulnerable children.



Evidence & Lived Experience ...continued

Lived Experience: Survivor Testimonies

Moderator: Ina Verzivolli, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF ECARO

Alongside the empirical evidence, the conference foregrounded the voices of survivors of violence, whose testimonies illustrated the human cost behind the statistics.

Survivors spoke about the lifelong psychological, physical and social impacts of violence, and the systemic failures that allowed abuse to continue. They highlighted the persistence of silence, stigma and legal barriers, and the urgent need for survivor-centred, trauma-informed systems that prioritise dignity, accountability and long-term recovery.

Constance Bertrand, a French survivor and activist shared her experience of abuse in French Catholic school settings. She described how institutional silence, intimidation and protection of perpetrators allowed violence to become normalised across generations. Her testimony demonstrated how abuse damages survivors' self-worth, education, health, relationships and opportunities throughout life. She urged governments to treat child protection as a priority and to involve survivors directly in shaping policies and reforms.

Dr. Matthew McVarish, a survivor from Scotland and a co-founder of the global Brave Movement challenged the assumption that late reporting weakens cases of child sexual abuse. He explained how severe trauma often delays disclosure for decades, and how statutes of limitation can protect perpetrators rather than victims. Drawing on his own experience of seeking justice, he called for the abolition of limitation periods for child sexual violence and

for universal implementation of the Lanzarote Convention without exceptions or reservations.

Scharliina Eräpuro, a survivor, artist and activist from Finland and Sweden described her journey from surviving childhood sexual abuse to becoming an advocate and artist. She spoke of years of silence, illness and systemic neglect, and stressed that shame belongs to perpetrators and complicit institutions, not survivors. She condemned the failure of states to prioritise child protection, particularly in the context of expanding online abuse, and called for trauma-informed justice, rapid removal of abusive online content, and guaranteed access to long-term therapeutic support. Mie Kohiyama, a French survivor and co-founder of the Brave Movement, underscored the importance of bringing survivor voices to policy-making process. Governments can develop more informed, empathetic and effective policies by actively involving survivors of childhood sexual violence. ■

Together, the evidence and lived testimonies reinforce a central message of the conference: violence against children is both a public policy failure and a deeply human tragedy. Effective responses must therefore combine robust data, strong systems and meaningful engagement with those who have lived through violence.



Thematic Session Summaries

This section synthesises the main discussions and conclusions from the six thematic sessions, which explored key dimensions of preventing and responding to violence against children. Across all sessions, a common message emerged: effective change requires moving from fragmented interventions towards coherent, integrated and child-centred systems.



Moderator: Christina de Bruin, UNICEF Representative to Bulgaria



Participants stressed that legal reform, technological innovation and family and school-based prevention must evolve together. The European Commission presented its

Türkiye presented national efforts addressing online grooming, harmful content and digital fraud, including inter-institutional cooperation, digital parenting education and the proposal for an international Convention on Children's Rights in the Digital World. Technical experts highlighted how fragmented systems and inconsistent definitions currently undermine global cooperation on child sexual abuse material. The Global Standard Project was presented as an initiative to harmonise terminology, strengthen identification and improve cross-border collaboration.

Latvia's Safer Internet Centre demonstrated its "Dangerous Online Friendship" tool, which has reached more than 10,000 children and revealed widespread exposure to grooming and manipulative online behaviour. Participants underlined that prevention must start early and be supported by accessible helplines, hotlines and trusted reporting mechanisms.

The session concluded that effective online protection requires aligned legislation, platform accountability, prevention through education and family support, and meaningful child and survivors participation in digital policy design.



Thematic Session Summaries ...continued

2. Universal Prevention Through Safe and Nurturing Schools and Families

Moderator: Christine Gaignebet, UNICEF Deputy Representative to Belarus



This session focused on how schools and families can jointly prevent violence and foster safe, nurturing environments for children. Key interventions came from Prof. Josipa Mihić, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation, University of Zagreb, Ms. Christine Kolbe-Stuart, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF HQ, Ms. Constance Bertrand, Lived experience expert, Ms. Mihreta Fejzula, Ministry of Education, Republic of Serbia, Mr. Mustafa Otrar, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Director General of Special Education and Guidance Services at the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye, Ms. Cătălina Chendea, Inspector, Ministry of Education and Research, Romania, Ms. Nassymzhan Ospanova, Chairperson of the Children's Rights Protection Committee of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Professor Josipa Mihić presented evidence demonstrating that violence against children has long-term impacts on mental health, learning and physical wellbeing. She emphasised that prevention must be evidence-based and delivered through whole-school approaches, including strong leadership, clear anti-violence policies, positive school climate, staff training, socio-emotional learning, student participation and community engagement.

Gender-transformative approaches promoting positive, non-violent parenting and healthy masculinities were identified as essential components of prevention.

Country examples illustrated practical implementation. Kazakhstan described the national rollout of its anti-bullying programme, strengthened psychological services and its child helpline. Serbia presented its post-2023 reforms following the Belgrade school shooting, including expanded psychosocial support and improved intersectoral coordination. Türkiye highlighted its investments in guidance and counselling services and targeted programmes for migrant children and children with special educational needs. Romania presented its unified national framework for preventing and addressing school violence and its focus on strengthening socio-emotional learning and family-school partnerships.

The session reaffirmed that sustainable prevention depends on long-term political commitment, cross-sectoral coordination and consistent investment in both schools and families.



Thematic Session Summaries ...continued

3. Statutory Family Support to Prevent Family Separation

Moderator: Regina M. Castillo, UNICEF Representative to Uzbekistan



This session addressed how legally mandated family support services can prevent unnecessary family separation and reduce children's exposure to violence. It featured interventions from Ms. Joanna Rogers, Expert for Social and Child Protection, Ms. Felicia Berchtold, State Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Moldova, Ms. Elena Tudor, General Director, National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights and Adoption, Romania, Ms. Natalia Efremova, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria, Mr. Kresimir Makvic, Senior Advisor for Children, Families and Young People at Risk, Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Family, and Social Policy, Croatia, Ms. Stefania Boscato, Senior Official, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, & Mr. Andrea Petrella, Research Associate, University of Padua, Italy.

Joanna Rogers presented statutory family support as a system of legally grounded interventions aimed at reducing risk, strengthening families and preventing institutionalisation. She emphasised the importance of clear legal frameworks, sustainable financing, structured gatekeeping, integrated case management and a properly resourced social service workforce.

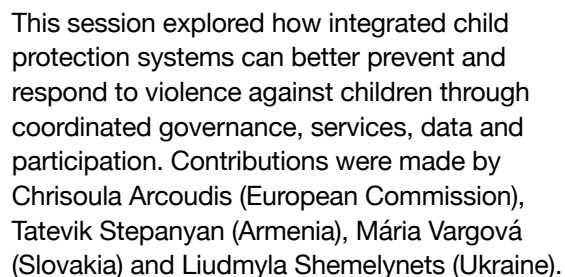
Romania presented its 2023 (Law on Prevention Activities to Avoid the Separation of Children from Their Families) and the development of a Child Observatory within its national information system. Croatia described its shift towards preventive, family-oriented services through its network of Family Centres and the Croatian Institute for Social Work. Italy presented its P.I.P.I. (Program of Intervention for Prevention of Institutionalization) programme, a rights-based national model for preventing institutionalisation, built on co-design, multidisciplinary support and participatory evaluation.

Participants highlighted that statutory family support must be accessible, inclusive of children with disabilities and marginalised families, and anchored in clear accountability mechanisms.



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Moderator: Paolo Marchi, UNICEF Representative to Türkiye



The session demonstrated that integrated systems are particularly critical in humanitarian and crisis contexts, where risks of violence are heightened and services often disrupted.



Thematic Session Summaries ...continued

5. Multidisciplinary Services for Child Victims and Witnesses

Moderator: Mr. Aaron Greenberg, Regional Advisor, Child Protection, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

This session focused on strengthening multidisciplinary and interagency services for child victims and witnesses of violence, in line with child rights principles and emerging international standards. Key presentations were delivered by Ms. Ina Verzivoli, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Ms. Ciresica Feyer, Deputy Head of Unit, European Pillar of Social Rights, SG REFORM, European Commission, Mr. Mathew McVarish, Multi-award-winning human rights activist and survivor of childhood sexual abuse, co-founder of the BRAVE Movement, Mr. Niko Tatulashvili, Head of the Human Rights Department of the Government Administration of Georgia, Ms. Mersida Aljicevic, State Secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography of Montenegro, Ms. Magdalena Bochińska, Chief Specialist, Ministry of Justice of Poland, Ms. Marilin Küünarpuu, Barnahus service owner, Child Welfare Department, Estonian Social Insurance Board

UNICEF presented comparative findings from six countries, highlighting the importance of strong legal anchoring, clear interagency protocols and specialised, trained professionals. Persistent challenges include weak coordination between justice and child protection services and uneven implementation of standard operating procedures.

Country experiences from Poland, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Türkiye and Romania highlighted progress in developing Barnahus or Children's House models, expanding psychosocial services in schools and strengthening coordination between justice and social services.

Participants stressed that multidisciplinary services must be child-friendly, trauma-informed and embedded in broader prevention and protection systems, not isolated pilot projects.



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Thematic Session Summaries ...continued

6. Child Justice Reforms as a Pillar of Ending Violence

Moderator: Cristina Cuculas, Secretary-General, National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights and Adoption, Romania



This session examined child justice reform as both a legal obligation and a key strategy for preventing and responding to violence against children. Key speakers included Ms. Edith Bardel, Child Protection Officer, Office of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Ms. Agnes von Maravic, Head of Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe, Ms. Chloe Laurens-Dinsdale, Team Leader Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, Civil Society, European Commission, Mr. Niyazi Acar, Deputy Minister of Justice, Republic of Türkiye, Ms. Anna Karapetyan, Deputy Minister of Justice, Republic of Armenia and Ms. Klaudia Hasanllari, Director of the Juvenile Criminality Prevention Centre, Ministry of Justice, Republic of Albania. Participants emphasised that children in conflict with the law are often victims of earlier violence, poverty and exclusion, and that detention constitutes a form of violence in itself.

Immigration detention is never in the best interests of the child, while detention in the administration of Justice must be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, in line with international standards, due to its harmful impact, with priority given to alternatives.

Evidence highlighted that diversion and restorative justice approaches reduce reoffending and support reintegration more effectively than punitive models.

The Council of Europe presented its Guidelines on Child-Friendly Justice and ongoing updates addressing emerging challenges. National examples from Türkiye, Armenia and Albania demonstrated progress in reducing child detention, expanding diversion mechanisms and establishing child-friendly judicial procedures and Barnahus services.

The session concluded that effective child justice reform must prioritise prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration, and be integrated within broader child protection and social protection systems.



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1. UN TF Advocacy Brief on Immigration detention and administration of Justice : <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/media/586>

The Pathfinding Global Alliance on Ending Violence Against Children



The Pathfinding Global Alliance was launched in November 2024 during the first Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Bogotá.

It aims to accelerate progress towards ending all forms of violence against children by 2030 and beyond, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and international child rights standards.

At the Bucharest conference, the dedicated session on the Pathfinding Global Alliance was chaired by Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children. She emphasised that The Global Alliance represents a shift from commitments to concrete actions and implementation, anchored in stronger political leadership, integrated governance and whole-of-government coordination.

Particular attention was given to the role of Pathfinding Countries in Europe and Central Asia as catalysts for regional reform and innovation.² These countries were encouraged to lead by example in strengthening integrated child protection systems, mobilising cross-sectoral responses and reinforcing

accountability mechanisms at local, national and regional levels.

The Alliance currently brings together 48 Pathfinding Countries from all regions. It operates through a flexible, country-driven model that supports governments in translating political commitments into accessible and integrated services for children and their caregivers. It promotes cooperation across child protection, health, education, social protection and justice sectors, and fosters partnerships with civil society, faith-based and community leaders, the private sector, academia, media, survivors and children themselves.

Key areas of support include high-level political engagement, technical assistance for capacity-building, peer learning and support for costing and implementation of integrated child protection services. The Alliance also provides tools such as the Investment Case Toolkit, which enables governments to assess the economic costs of violence and the return on investment in prevention and response; and the Marketplace for Knowledge Sharing, an online platform to showcase promising practices to end violence against children.

Regional engagement is being advanced through a series of Pathfinding regional meetings across Europe and Central Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Middle East and North Africa and Asia in 2025, leading towards a Global meeting in early 2026.³ Aligned with the core message of the Bucharest conference, the Pathfinding Global Alliance underlines that ending violence against children is not only a moral and legal obligation, but also a strategic investment in human capital, social cohesion and sustainable development. ■



2. The 11 Pathfinding countries from ECA region: Armenia, Finland, France, Iceland, Georgia, Montenegro, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye and Uzbekistan. 3. The first regional meeting of Pathfinding countries was organized in cooperation with the Council of Europe on the margins of the Committee on the Rights of the child to highlight also cooperation with regional organizations.

Bilateral Meetings

The conference also provided a platform for targeted bilateral and trilateral exchanges between delegations and institutional representatives. These meetings complemented the plenary and thematic discussions by enabling more detailed dialogue on concrete reforms, technical cooperation and future collaboration.

Several bilateral meetings focused on legislative reform and systems strengthening. The delegations of Serbia and Hungary discussed national reforms related to violence against children, including legislative frameworks, intersectoral coordination and family policy development. The exchange also included an invitation for the Hungarian Minister to participate in Serbia's National Conference on Family and discussions on a potential Memorandum of Cooperation to facilitate continued exchange on pro-family and child protection policies.

The delegations of Montenegro and Estonia centred their discussions on Estonia's experience in establishing the Barnahus model. Montenegro expressed interest in organising a study visit for government representatives in order to support the planned operationalisation and expansion of Barnahus services nationally. The delegations of the Slovak Republic and Sweden focused on preventing radicalisation among children and adolescents. Their exchange covered approaches to de-radicalisation, professional training, capacity-building and strategies for reducing societal polarisation and promoting social cohesion among young people.

The Tajikistan and Romania delegations discussed the implementation of Tajikistan's ban on corporal punishment. The dialogue addressed practical aspects such as identification and referral mechanisms, training of professionals, and the strengthening of prevention and response services to ensure the effective operationalisation of the legal reform. The delegations of Armenia and Serbia explored opportunities for cooperation and exchange of experience in the field of protecting children from violence, including knowledge-sharing on child protection systems and multidisciplinary responses.



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Bilateral meetings ...continued



The Türkiye delegation met with Sheema SenGupta, Director of Child Protection and Migration at UNICEF Headquarters, to explore the scaling up of violence against children programming in Türkiye. Topics included national parenting programmes, temporary foster care, alternatives to detention through diversion mechanisms, and addressing online violence.

Kazakhstan also held a trilateral meeting with Juno Maria Petra Blom, Director General and Ombudsperson for Children in Sweden, together with Vasile Coroi, Chairperson of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children. Discussions focused on the forthcoming Central Asian meeting of Child Rights Ombudspersons, planned for September 2026 in Astana, and opportunities for regional cooperation.

Additional bilateral meetings included exchanges between the Uzbekistan delegation Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, (the SRSV VAC joined online) and Edith Bardel, Child Protection Officer in the Office of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, also with survivors and delegations expressing interest in joining the Global Alliance such as Kazakhstan and Bulgaria, to discuss the upcoming Global meeting of the Pathfinding Global Alliance.

Overall, the bilateral meetings reflected strong political commitment to regional cooperation, mutual learning and practical collaboration to accelerate progress on ending violence against children. ■

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Key Outcomes and Commitments of the Conference

This section summarises the political, policy and operational outcomes of the Bucharest Regional Ministerial Conference, reflecting ministerial pledges and commitments articulated by children and adolescents. Together, they demonstrate a shared regional resolve across Europe and Central Asia to move from declarations towards implementation, accountability, and impact.

Ministerial Commitments

Ministers and heads of delegation presented new or renewed national commitments linked to the Bogotá 2024 Global Ministerial Conference and the regional Call to Action.

Strengthening national legislation and policy frameworks

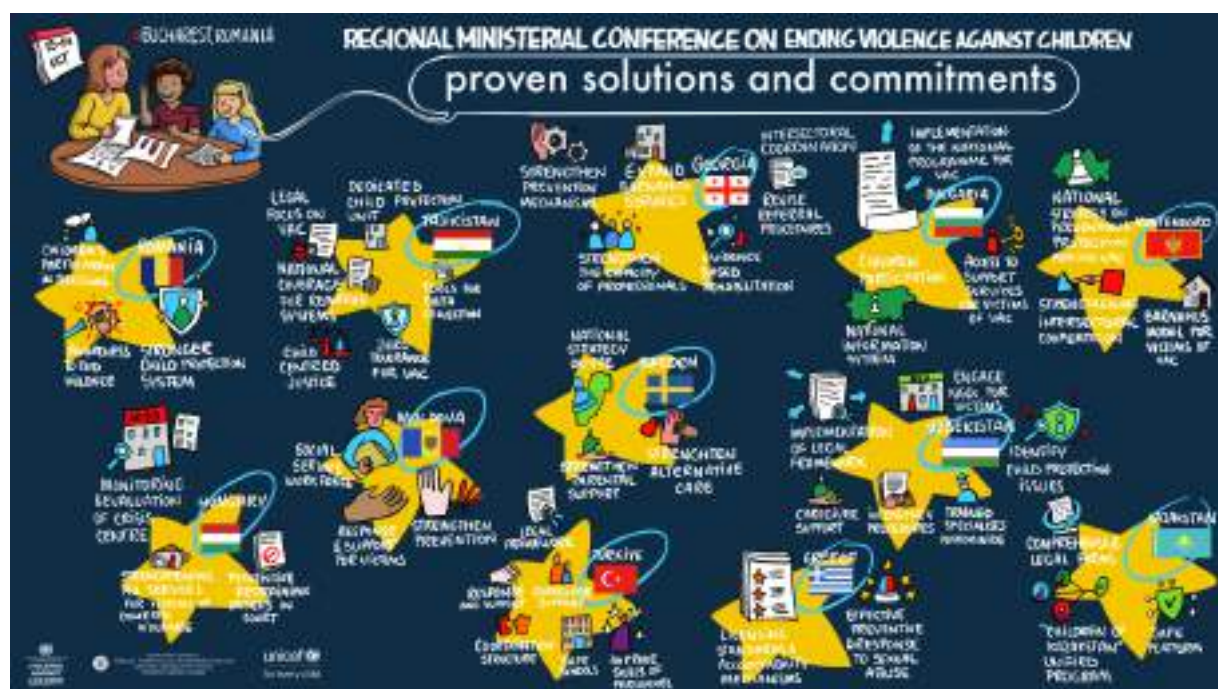
Several countries committed to strengthening or adopting national strategies, legislation, and policy frameworks on violence against children.

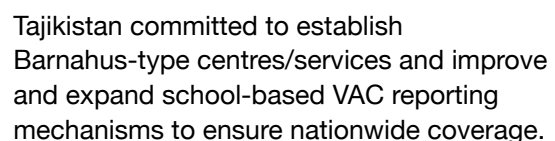
Serbia committed to developing a new national strategy on ending violence against children, strengthening intersectoral monitoring mechanisms, improving access to justice for child victims and witnesses, and reinforcing prevention through mental health and school violence prevention measures.

Montenegro reaffirmed commitment to implementing its 2025–2029 National Strategy and further operationalising the Barnahus model, alongside continued policy reforms.

Greece committed to implementing its national action plan on protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, supported by a national information technology monitoring system and strengthened accountability mechanisms.

Illustration © UNICEF





Key Outcomes and Commitments of the Conference ...continued

Expanding and improving child protection and support services

Governments committed to strengthening systems for identification, reporting, case management, and multidisciplinary support for child victims of violence.

Albania committed to strengthening early identification of violence, expanding the child protection workforce, increasing social service funding, and establishing community-based and one-stop support services nationwide.

Türkiye committed to expanding psychosocial services, strengthening multidisciplinary teams, enhancing digital parenting initiatives, and improving care for children in alternative care and shelters.

Kazakhstan committed to combining all mechanisms that protect rights of children in all spheres and establishing a vision for the next coming years on social protection, family support services, health care, education, safety and to Further strengthen violence prevention through schools and parenting programs.

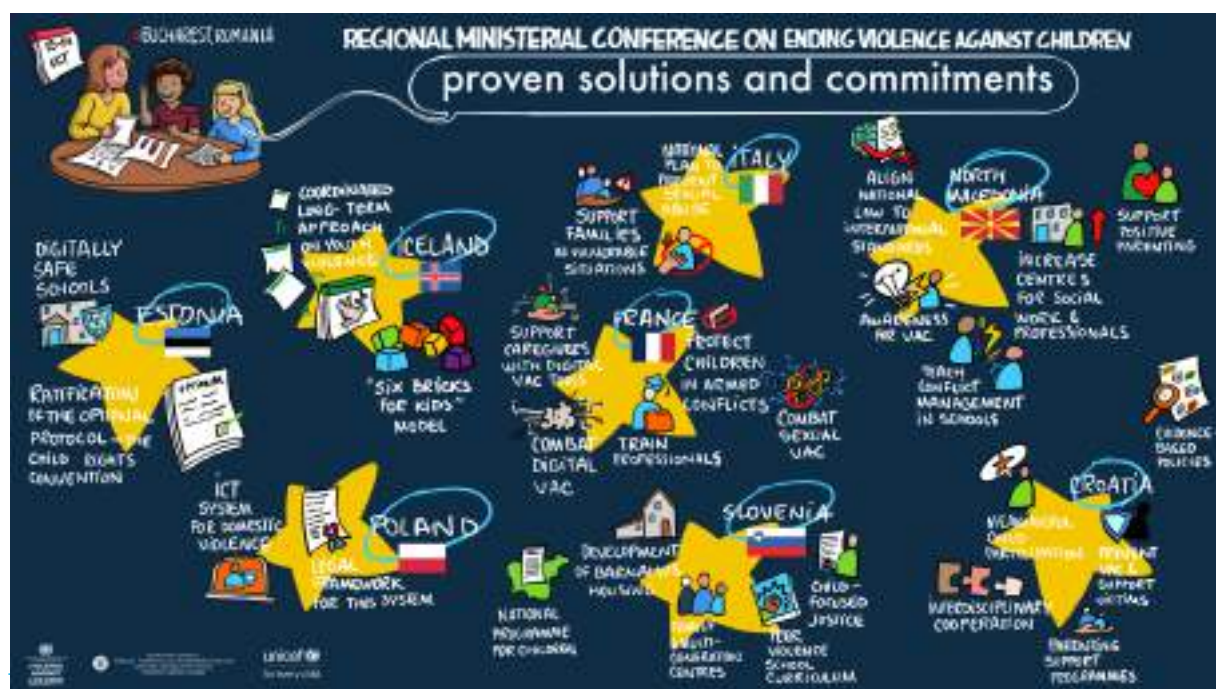
Ukraine committed to expanding resilience centres, foster and patronage care services, reintegration support and national digital monitoring systems for children affected by conflict and displacement.

Uzbekistan committed to implementing its Law on Child Protection, strengthening interagency coordination, piloting multifunctional child protection centres, expanding helpline services and scaling positive parenting programmes.

Moldova committed to expanding Barnahus services, strengthening social services and helpline outreach, and increasing investment in parenting programmes and prevention campaigns.

Georgia committed to strengthen coordination between child welfare, protection, justice, education, and other sectors at national and local levels. Also, expansion of Barnahus service to ensure access to child-friendly, multidisciplinary, and interagency services for child victims of violence is one of the priorities.

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Key Outcomes and Commitments of the Conference ...continued

Armenia, Hungary, and Bosnia and Herzegovina reaffirmed commitments to strengthening national child protection services and response mechanisms through ongoing reforms.

North Macedonia committed to closing all large-scale institutions for children as part of the deinstitutionalization process ensuring that children grow in safe family environments and to strengthen legislation, expanded family- and community-based services, and invest in professional development across sectors.

Turkmenistan committed to continue strengthening national legislation and coordination mechanisms on child protection through review of normative acts on child and family support and development the relevant national strategies and to strengthen early intervention and integrated social work to prevent family separation and reduce institutionalization of children.

Scaling multidisciplinary and child-friendly justice approaches

Several countries committed to strengthening child-friendly justice services and reducing re-traumatisation of child victims.

Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Moldova committed to prioritising and expanding Barnahus or Children's House models.

Slovenia committed to continued expansion of its Barnahus model and strengthening legal frameworks for child-friendly justice.

Poland committed to establishing a centralised information and communication technology system for handling domestic violence cases, strengthening safeguarding standards and multi-agency cooperation.

Croatia committed to expanding child-friendly justice procedures, psychosocial and legal support for victims and strengthened intersectoral coordination.

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Key Outcomes and Commitments of the Conference ...continued

Strengthening family support and preventing institutionalisation

Countries reaffirmed commitments to family-based care and to reducing reliance on institutionalisation.

Türkiye committed to prioritising family strengthening services, expanding foster care and strengthen schools' capacity to support students' mental health and identify students that are at-risk.

Albania reaffirmed its moratorium on institutionalisation of children aged 0 to 2 and committed to completing deinstitutionalisation reforms.

Kyrgyzstan committed to banning corporal punishment in all settings by 2030 and to the implementation of National Standards for parenting programmes and national parenting training modules by 2027.

Ukraine, Slovakia, and Croatia committed to expanding foster, guardianship, and alternative care systems, including specialised family-based care.

Latvia committed to promote lasting awareness, safety, and prevention and to enhance Interdisciplinary Collaboration at Municipal Level.

Portugal places the promotion of the rights and protection of children and young people at the centre of public policies, prioritizes children's well-being, integral development, and safety as an investment in their future adoption of a holistic and multisectoral perspective in all matters relating to children and young people.

Protecting children in digital environments

Digital safety emerged as a core cross-cutting priority.

France committed to strengthening national and international action on online child sexual exploitation and promoting children's rights in the digital environment.

Türkiye committed to strengthening digital parenting, preventing cyberbullying, and promoting the proposed Convention on Children's Rights in the Digital World.

Poland committed to strengthening digital monitoring systems, reporting mechanisms and safe school curricula addressing online risks.

Estonia committed to integrating the digital learning environment and its risks into the national curriculum as part of core digital competence; designing and delivering inclusive, age-appropriate education that raises awareness among children, young people, families, and practitioners about all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse; and investing in education systems, policies, and secure digital tools that embed online safety and promote safe, creative, and critical digital learning.

Strengthening data, monitoring, and accountability

Several governments committed to improving national data systems on violence against children and aligning with international standards.

Commitments included enhancing administrative data systems, adopting the International Classification of Violence Against Children, investing in integrated national platforms, and establishing mechanisms to monitor implementation of ministerial pledges.

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Key Outcomes and Commitments of the Conference ...continued

Child and Adolescent Commitments and Contributions

Children and adolescents participating in the conference articulated commitments and expectations for change based on regional consultations and engagement during the event.

They committed to advocating for stronger awareness and education on physical, psychological, sexual, and online violence, including cyberbullying and mental health. They committed to promoting peer support, youth-led workshops and safe spaces in schools and communities. They called for accessible and child-friendly reporting mechanisms and trusted adult support. They committed to challenging stigma, silence and victim-blaming around sexual violence and mental health. They also committed to continuing meaningful participation in decision-making processes at local, national, and regional levels.

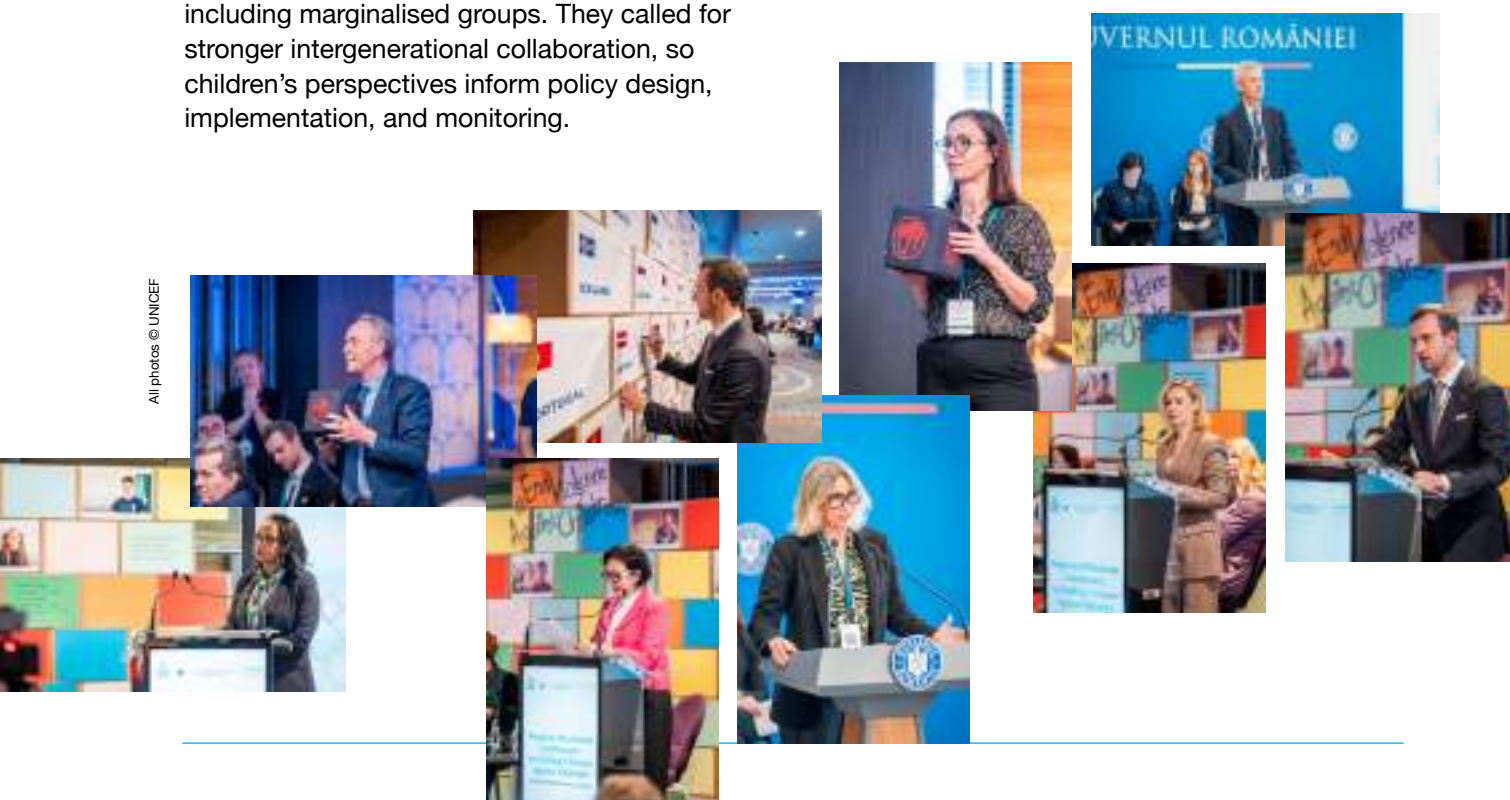
Child participants further emphasised the importance of sustained engagement beyond one-off events. They highlighted the need to include children from diverse backgrounds, including marginalised groups. They called for stronger intergenerational collaboration, so children's perspectives inform policy design, implementation, and monitoring.

Shared Priorities between Ministers and Children

Despite different roles and responsibilities, ministers and children converged around shared priorities. These included elevating ending violence against children as a political priority, ensuring access to child-friendly justice and trauma-informed services, expanding mental health and psychosocial support, strengthening prevention, early intervention and family support services, addressing online risks and digital exploitation and cyberbullying through integrated prevention, protection and regulation, strengthening data systems, transparency and accountability mechanisms, and guaranteeing meaningful and structurally embedded child participation in all decision-making processes.

Together, these commitments form the foundation for the next phase of regional action, moving from political promises towards funded, measurable and accountable implementation across Europe and Central Asia. ■

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Annexes

[ANNEX 1](#)

Regional Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children- AGENDA

[ANNEX 2](#)

List of Participants/Attendees

[ANNEX 3](#)

Pledges

[ANNEX 4](#)

Where we Live and Learn Report

[ANNEX 5](#)

Digital Assets:
Video recordings
Photographs
Graphic Scribe

Thank you



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