

**Fostering Child-Friendly Legal Environments
through collaborative networks**

FOSTER E- newsletter

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About the FOSTER Project

The project **FOSTER – Fostering Child-Friendly Legal Environments through collaborative networks** has the aim to create a child-friendly justice system and strengthen the legal representation of child victims by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and awareness of lawyers working in this sensitive and crucial area.

Key Objectives

The project's primary goal is to

- Build the capacity of lawyers by providing training on children's rights, the legal framework for the rights of crime victims (EU Directive 2012/29), trauma-informed approach, and victim-sensitive communication.
- Foster the development of strong cooperation networks among legal practitioners, judicial authorities, state actors, and civil society organisations involved in child protection.

Project partners and involved countries

The project is implemented in four European countries: Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovenia by a consortium of five partner organisations:

- The [Center for the Study of Democracy – CSD](#) in Bulgaria
- The [ELTE Centre for Social Sciences](#) in Hungary,
- The [Institute of Criminology \(IK\)](#) at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- The [Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos – SSP. P. Sakellaropoulos](#) in Greece, and
- The [Centre for European Constitutional Law – CECL](#) in Greece, as project coordinator.

The project is co-funded by the European Union under the Justice Programme (JUST-2023-JACC-EJUSTICE/ 101160568).

National Roundtables

Between September 2025 and April 2026, FOSTER project partners organised sixteen national roundtables across the four partner countries – Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, and



Slovenia. The events brought together judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers, psychologists, social workers, academics, child protection practitioners, journalists, policymakers, and civil society representatives to exchange knowledge, identify common challenges, and share promising practices in supporting child victims of crime and safeguarding their rights.

National Roundtables Overview

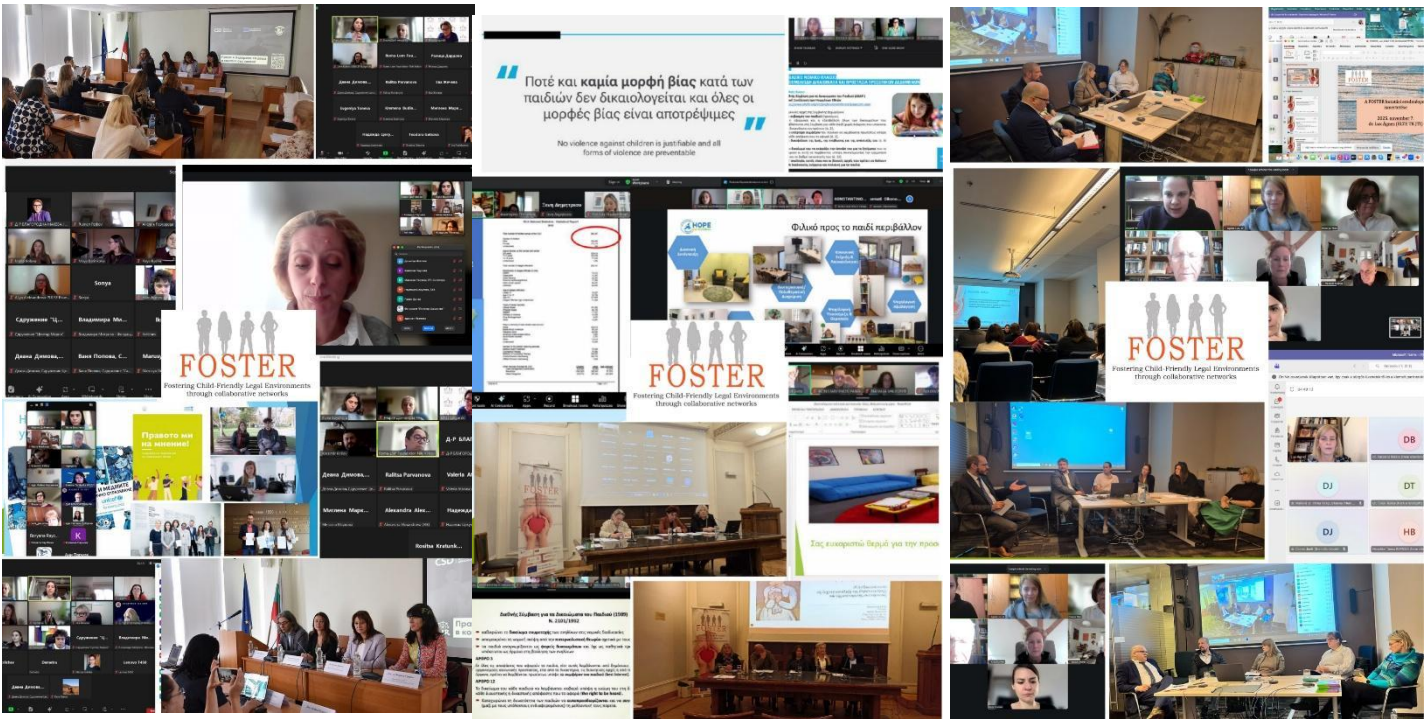
Country	Date	Topics	Number of participants
Bulgaria	23 Sept 2025	Rights and support for children in contact with the law	116 participants
	15 Jan 2026	Media coverage of cases involving children	
	22 Jan 2026	Protection for Roma children, victims of crime	
	26 Jan 2026	Cooperation between and with institutions in support of victims of domestic violence	
Greece	25 Sept 2025	The operation of Children’s Houses in Greece	198 participants
	4 Feb 2026	When juvenile delinquency conceals victimisation	
	30 Mar 2026	Intersection of civil and criminal proceedings	
	27 Apr 2026	The representation of child abuse cases in the media	
Hungary	16 Oct 2025	FOSTER National Roundtable with state stakeholders	154 participants
	7 Nov 2025	Judicial expert roundtable	
	22 Jan 2026	Working together for child victims	
	12 Feb 2026	Protection, recognition and support of child victims of crime	
Slovenia	6 Mar 2026	Juveniles as perpetrators and victims of criminal offences	272 participants
	10 Mar 2026	Criminal offenses related to children in virtual environments	
	24 Mar 2026	Forced and early marriages of Roma girls in Slovenia	
	28 Mar 2026	Juveniles as both offenders and victims	



International Roundtables

Two international roundtables complemented the national events, reinforcing key findings while providing a valuable opportunity for comparative reflection. Participants identified shared implementation challenges, exchanged experiences regarding multidisciplinary models such as Children’s Houses, and highlighted the importance of trauma-informed and child-centred approaches.

Date and format	Title	Participants
25 Oct 2025 / online	Working together for child victims	26 participants
11 Mar 2026 / online	Child victims belonging to vulnerable groups	36 participants



Key Findings from the Roundtables¹

Common Challenges Across Countries

Despite differences in national context, the discussions revealed considerable similarities across the four countries. Participants consistently pointed to:

¹ FOSTER, D4.1 Report on the national and international networking activities, 2026 (confidential).



- A persistent gap between legal standards and everyday practice;
- The continued risk of secondary victimisation of children within justice systems;
- The need for stronger multidisciplinary cooperation among professionals working with child victims;
- A lack of specialised training for professionals working with children;
- Structural constraints, including insufficient resources, staff shortages, and unequal access to specialised services.

National Priorities and Perspectives

At the same time, the roundtables highlighted important differences in national priorities and contexts:

- **Bulgaria** – the discussions focused primarily on access to justice for child victims, with an emphasis on those in vulnerable situations who are of Roma origin and those affected by domestic violence. Another focus was on media coverage of criminal cases involving children.
- **Greece** – participants paid particular attention to the operation of Children's Houses, juvenile delinquency, and the interaction between civil and criminal proceedings and media coverage of cases of child abuse.
- **Hungary** – discussions concentrated on child protection systems, professional cooperation, children participation rights, and the conceptualisation of the child within justice systems.
- **Slovenia** – the roundtables highlighted juvenile offending and victimisation, online risks, and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law.

The international roundtables reinforced many of these findings while offering a valuable opportunity for comparative reflection across the partner countries. One of the strongest findings emerging from the international discussions was the existence of a persistent implementation gap between legal frameworks and professional practice. Across countries, participants observed that child-friendly procedures are only as effective as the professionals responsible for implementing them. Even the most advanced legal frameworks may fail to achieve their objectives if practitioners lack sufficient understanding of child development, trauma, communication, and children's rights. The international discussions confirmed that secondary victimisation remains one of the most significant challenges affecting child victims across countries. The



discussions reinforced the importance of designing systems that minimise unnecessary contact with institutions while ensuring that children receive comprehensive support throughout the process.

Policy Paper on Child Protection in Criminal Proceedings

The policy paper examines how the rights of child victims of crime can be more effectively safeguarded within criminal proceedings. It pursues three related objectives: first, to set out the international and European legal framework establishing minimum standards for the treatment of child victims; second, to distil from that framework a common core of principles that should underpin child-friendly criminal proceedings in any national context; and third, to examine how these principles are being applied in practice in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, and Slovenia, drawing on direct evidence gathered from practitioners through the FOSTER project's national and international roundtables.

The paper is deliberately structured around a common core and a country-specific layer. Legal obligations stemming from United Nations, Council of Europe, and European Union instruments apply across all four countries and the European Union as a whole; the principles distilled from them are presented as standards of general application. The paper then turns to the specific institutional arrangements, achievements, and gaps identified in each country, recognising that effective implementation depends on national legal traditions, institutional capacity, and resources. Its recommendations follow the same logic, separating measures that should apply across all national contexts from those addressed to specific countries.

The policy paper is drafted by the Centre for European Constitutional Law in Greece, in collaboration with the FOSTER project partners.

You can download the policy paper in [English here](#).

Intersectoral Networking Guide for Lawyers

The Intersectoral Networking Guide for Lawyers has been developed as a practical resource to support legal professionals in building and sustaining effective collaborative relationships with stakeholders involved in child protection and child-friendly justice. The Guide aims to strengthen lawyers' capacity to identify relevant actors, understand their roles and responsibilities, navigate referral pathways and contribute actively to promote the rights, wellbeing, participation, and recovery of child victims.

Structured around three critical chronological phases – Prevention, Intervention, and Rehabilitation – the Guide allows lawyers to immediately identify their position within



the broader child protection system, the actions required at each stage, and the entities and colleagues from other sectors with whom they must collaborate to manage a case effectively. For each organisation, service, or stakeholder included in the Guide, users will find information on the professionals involved and their areas of expertise; the core competencies, mandates, and responsibilities of the organisation or service; the sector to which it belongs; the relevant legal and institutional framework governing its establishment and operation; and available contact information and web links – facilitating referrals, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration around the child victim.

The Intersectoral Networking Guide is drafted by the Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellariopoulos in Greece, in collaboration with the FOSTER project partners.

You can download the [Intersectoral Networking Guide in English here](#).

Last call for the FOSTER E- learning course!

An e-learning course developed by the project partners is available on the CECL e-learning platform (Cecl.edu.gr). The course is designed for legal professionals and addresses key topics including child-friendly justice, the rights of child victims of crime under international and EU law, ethical considerations and data protection, child developmental psychology and communication, trauma-informed approaches, and cross-sectoral collaboration.

The training is enriched with a variety of engaging resources, such as videos, case studies, and interactive exercises, to support practical learning and application.

The course is offered in English, Greek, Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Slovenian. Interested participants can access it **free of charge** by creating an account on the [cecl.edu platform](#).

Designed with user-friendly navigation, the course allows participants to progress through modules at their own pace, according to their individual needs and preferences. The total duration is approximately three hours, and participants receive a certificate upon successful completion.

Interested participants are encouraged to complete the e- course by **July 31st, 2026**.

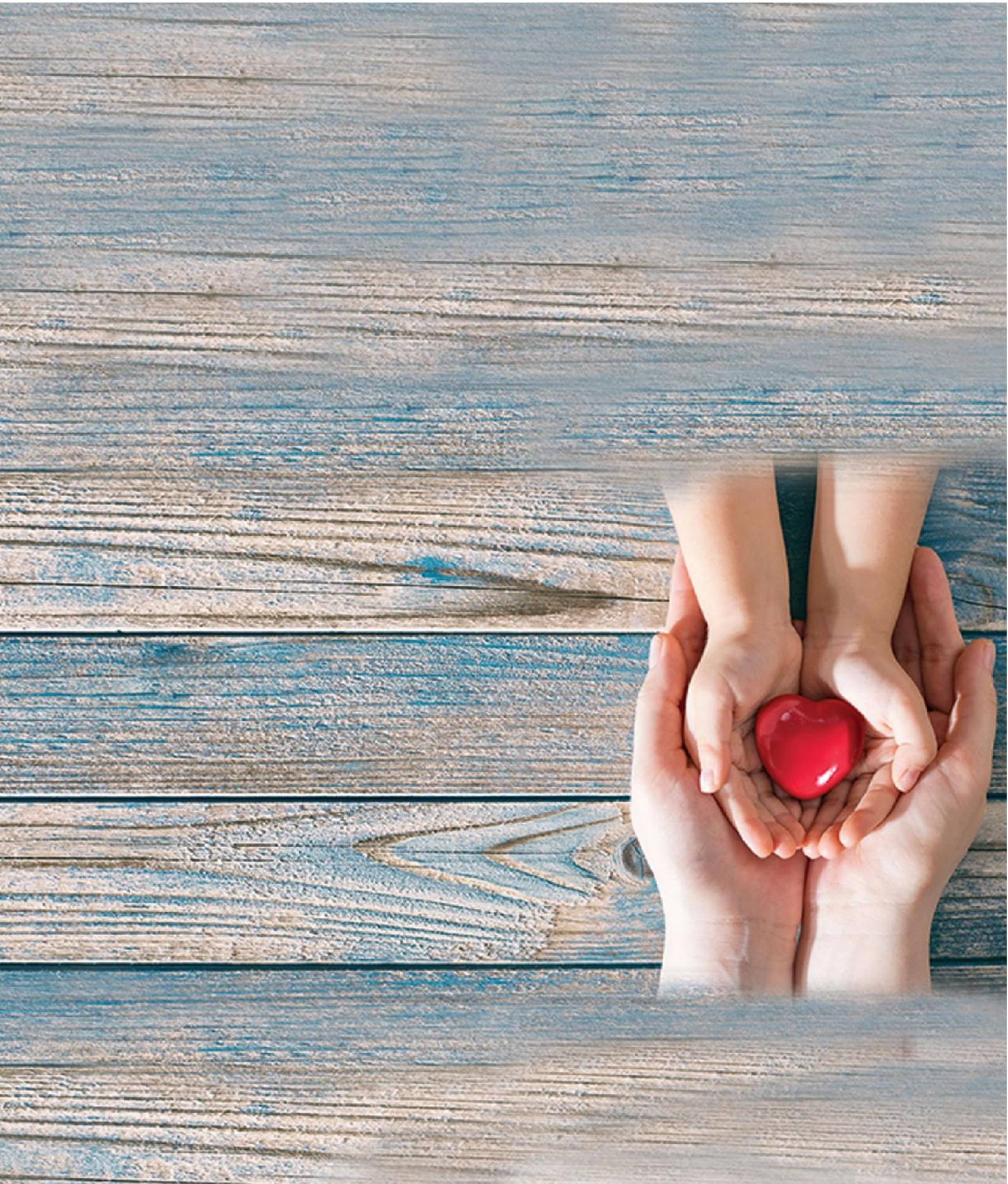


Stay Connected

Whether you're a legal practitioner, lawyer, public authority representative, or child protection professional, your engagement is warmly welcomed.

- **Website:** <https://www.cecl.gr/> and <https://jog.tk.elte.hu/en/foster>
- **Contact Us:** lux.agnes@tk.hu; szontagh.veronikaanna@tk.hu

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