



# **ISS OTTAWA PRINCIPLES**

**For protecting children and parents subject  
to family violence in cross-border situations**

These Principles use the term **family violence** rather than 'domestic violence' to emphasise that children can be impacted both as direct victims of violence by parents or other family members, and as individuals affected by violence occurring between family members, regardless of whether or not they live together.

Family violence is not limited to parents and children. It includes violent, threatening, harmful, coercive, or controlling behaviour by one family member toward another or between persons in close relationships living together.

Examples of family violence include physical assault, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, damage to property, threatening behaviour, humiliation, deprivation of liberty, restricting a person's contact with others, financial control, and harm to pets. Violence can also manifest in digital or technology-enabled forms.

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## Foreword

Dear reader,

When I look back on my many years working with children and families affected by violence, I remember not statistics, but people: children who needed someone to believe them, parents afraid to speak, and professionals carrying heavy responsibilities. These experiences shaped me and still guide me today in my role as a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, reminding me that, behind every file is a life, and behind every policy - a hope for safety and healing.

Despite international progress, responses to family violence still vary widely. Some children are protected quickly, others wait too long. And when cases cross borders, risks increase: procedures are more complex, communication becomes uncertain, and coordination fragile. In these moments, frontline professionals stand closest to the crisis, where empathy matters as much as technical skills.

Across cultures and legal systems, one principle remains universal and non-negotiable: violence is never acceptable! A child-centered, rights-based approach is not abstract language - it is a compass that guides our assessments and decisions, especially when borders could otherwise delay or weaken protection.

Children feel violence deeply, even when not directly targeted. Fear, instability, and tension leave marks that last well beyond childhood. This is why our interventions must be early, coordinated, and firmly grounded in international principles across institutions and borders.

The ISS Ottawa Principles were developed to support this work as a practical and holistic tool for professionals dealing with cross-border family violence cases. They are not meant to sit on a shelf, but to support professionals, helping them navigate complexities while keeping children at the centre.

I encourage you to use the ISS Ottawa Principles consistently in all cross-border domestic-violence cases where cooperation across countries is essential. When many practitioners walk in the same direction, systems begin to shift, and children become safer!

Thank you for the work you do, often quietly, often under pressure, always with impact. I hope the ISS Ottawa Principles strengthen your efforts to protect children and families experiencing violence, wherever they may be.

With appreciation and solidarity, yours Mariana Ianachevici,  
Chief Executive Officer at AO AVE Copiii (ISS Moldova),  
Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

December 12, 2025, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

## Background

Only in recent decades has family violence been officially recognised as a matter of international human rights law and legal doctrine. Traditionally viewed as a private or domestic issue, violence within families is now broadly acknowledged as a public concern with significant legal and social consequences. Several international and regional developments have contributed to this shift:

- **1989:** The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is targeted specifically to the rights of children and establishes them as autonomous rights holders.
- **1992:** The UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) issued its General Recommendation No. 19, prohibiting violence against women in both the public and private contexts.
- **1993:** The UN General Assembly issued its Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW).
- **1994:** The General Assembly of the Organisation of American States adopted the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem do Para Convention).
- **2002:** The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoE) adopted Recommendation Rec (2002) 5 on the Protection of Women against Violence.
- **2003:** The African Union adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Maputo Protocol), which defines the term 'violence against women'.
- **2011:** The CoE adopted the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) which entered into force on 1 August 2014. It is a major human rights treaty establishing comprehensive legal standards to ensure women's right to be free from violence. It has been ratified by 39 parties of the Council of Europe.
- In parallel, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) considered a substantial number of cases on the issue of family violence.<sup>1</sup>
- Likewise, at the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), the issue has been debated for a long time.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ECtHR *Kontrova v. Slovakia*, Appl. no. 7510/04, Judgment of 31 May 2007 is among the Court's earliest decisions in this area, followed by a substantial body of subsequent case law; more recent judgements are ECtHR *Kurt v. Austria*, Appl. 62903/15, Judgment of 15 June 2021 and ECtHR *I.M. v. Italy*, Appl. no. 25426/20, Judgement of 10 November 2022. All relevant ECtHR decisions are available at: [www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/echr-case-law](http://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/echr-case-law) (30.01.2026).

<sup>2</sup> See the Conclusions and Recommendations (C&Rs) of the Eighth Meeting of the Special Commission on the practical operation of the Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (HCCH 1980 Child Abduction Convention) and the Convention of 19 October 1996 on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children (HCCH 1996 Child Protection Convention), October 2023 (2023 SC), available at: [assets.hcch.net/docs/5b48f412-6979-4dc1-b4c1-782fe0d5cfa7.pdf](https://assets.hcch.net/docs/5b48f412-6979-4dc1-b4c1-782fe0d5cfa7.pdf) (30.01.2026) and the more recent First and Second Forum on Domestic Violence and the Operation of Article 13 (1) (b) of the HCCH 1980 Child Abduction Convention held in 2024 in South Africa and in 2025 in Brazil available at: <https://www.hcch.net/en/publications-and-studies/details4/?pid=9035&dtid=50> and <https://www.hcch.net/en/publications-and-studies/details4/?pid=9107&dtid=50> (30.01.2026).

Alongside these legal developments<sup>3</sup>, there is increasing societal awareness of negative behaviours and social norms that fail to support victim-survivors of family violence. These include objectifying women, ignoring children's rights, shifting blame onto victims, or neglecting reports of family violence.

These Principles recognise progress at both the legal and societal levels but also acknowledge the limitations of current frameworks in addressing family violence in cross-border cases. They focus on cases within the scope of the Hague Conventions<sup>4</sup> and apply the general principles of these conventions regardless of whether the involved States are Contracting or non-Contracting States.

The Principles were developed by the International Social Service (ISS). As a global child rights organisation with over a century of experience supporting children and families, ISS has extensive expertise in handling cross-border cases. This experience allows ISS to observe ongoing challenges and share best practice principles that are sensitive and tailored to children experiencing violence. Therefore, in 2023, an ISS internal working group made up of experts from various regions (Australia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Switzerland) – all experienced in managing cross-border family conflicts - decided to start drafting a set of international principles aimed at identifying solutions on how best to protect children and parents in these sensitive matters. Several in-person and online meetings occurred throughout 2023 and 2024 to progress the drafting process. Finally, from January to June 2025, the group extensively consulted with renowned external experts and other ISS colleagues worldwide to gather feedback on the principles. They were officially adopted by ISS as a global network in September 2025.

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<sup>3</sup> Other conventions and consensus documents include: the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR, 1950); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TEU, TFEU, 2008: In Declaration No. 19, annexed to the Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference that adopted the Lisbon Treaty, the EU and the Member States committed themselves "to combat all kinds of domestic violence". With the same declaration, Member States commit themselves to take all necessary measures to prevent and persecute such criminal acts and to support and protect their victims.); the Regulation (EU) No 606/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters (2013); the 2025 CoE-Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of the rights and best interests of the child in parenting proceedings, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 28 May 2025 at the 1529<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (CM/Rec(2025)4).

<sup>4</sup> HCCH 1980 Child Abduction Convention and HCCH 1996 Child Protection Convention.

## Preamble

These Principles recognise that family violence is a multifaceted global issue. Structural factors such as unequal power relations within families, economic dependency<sup>5</sup>, lack of stable housing, precarious employment, and insecure residence status intensify the risk and impact of violence. These factors should be included in discussions and responses to family violence, as they are key to understanding the experiences of those affected.

While family violence affects all individuals, women<sup>6</sup> and children<sup>7</sup> face a disproportionate risk. International standards recognise children who witness or are exposed to violence within their own families to be victims of family violence in their own right.<sup>8</sup>

Cases of family violence often involve multiple jurisdictions and intersecting legal, cultural, and social systems, necessitating specialised responses, cooperation, and coordination across borders. These Principles are founded on the belief that no cultural, traditional, or religious justification can excuse acts of violence. Therefore, they encourage child protection services to improve their recognition of family violence and address the unique dynamics and complexities of cross-border family conflicts. While protection measures in cases of violence usually focus on safeguarding the affected adult, these Principles intentionally place the child at the centre of the response. They emphasise children as independent and autonomous rights holders, deserving of direct protection and tailored support.

The Principles aim to offer practical and multidisciplinary guidance to various stakeholders:

- Lawmakers and public authorities
- Courts
- Social service professionals and child protection actors
- Non-governmental organisations and civil society actors
- Law enforcement agencies
- Academics and researchers in child protection, family law, and human rights.

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<sup>5</sup> This factor is more important during separation, see: Molina S., Wagner L., Kreyenfeld M. Women's economic independence and physical intimate partner violence (IPV) during separation (2025) PLoS One 20(6): e0326529 available at: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0326529> (30.01.2026).

<sup>6</sup> An estimation of around 736 million (almost one in three) women has been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their life, 641 million women had been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence at least once since the age of 15. See World Health Organisation: Violence against women prevalence estimates 2018, Geneva, 2021, available at: [www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256](http://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256) (30.01.2026).

<sup>7</sup> Research findings suggest that childhood exposure to domestic and family violence affects around one in six people by 18 years of age globally, see: Whitten T., Tzoumakis S., Green M.J., Dean K. Global Prevalence of Childhood Exposure to Physical Violence within Domestic and Family Relationships in the General Population: A Systematic Review and Proportional Meta-Analysis, Trauma Violence Abuse, 2024 Apr;25(2):1411-1430, available at: [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10913340/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10913340/) (30.01.2026).

<sup>8</sup> Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence explicitly acknowledges that children who witness domestic violence are considered victims themselves, see (13), (68), Art. 2 (c), Art. 31.

By bridging the gap between legal frameworks and practical challenges, the Principles aim to enhance the ability of all actors to respond to cross-border family violence in a coordinated, child-focused, and culturally sensitive way. They draw on both international standards and existing practices that have proven to be beneficial, recognising the importance of tailoring responses to local contexts while upholding universal human and children's rights.

# The Principles

## Principle 1: Human Dignity and Human Rights

Human rights arise from human dignity and apply equally to everyone. Family violence directly violates these fundamental rights<sup>9</sup>, including the right to human dignity, life and physical integrity, the prohibition of inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, respect for private and family life, liberty and security, protection of personal data, non-discrimination, and children's rights.

Children who witness or are exposed to family violence experience the effects of such violence and are therefore victims of family violence themselves. Research shows that observing violence between parents can cause serious emotional and developmental problems for children, comparable to the consequences of direct abuse.<sup>10</sup>

Based on ISS' experience, it is crucial to address cross-border family violence using a human rights-based approach. Factors such as immigration status, citizenship, culture, language barriers, and economic dependence can distinguish family violence with an international element from purely domestic cases. States should consider these aspects when developing new legislation, policies, and practices to prevent and respond to cross-border family violence. States must also address legal restrictions on immigration and citizenship rights<sup>11</sup> to ensure comprehensive and effective measures that uphold the human rights of children and other family members.

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<sup>9</sup> Art. 3 Istanbul Convention states that violence against women is a human rights violation and a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women.

<sup>10</sup> The Istanbul Convention considers children exposed to violence as child victims of violence (see Preamble); European Economic and Social Committee on Children as Indirect Victims of Domestic Violence (2006/C 325/15) Official Journal of the European Union C 325/60, 30.12.2006, 2.2.4; On 14 May 2024, the EU adopted a Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, which is the first piece of EU legislation that specifically addresses these issues. See also ECtHR I.M. and Others v. Italy, Appl. no 25426/20, Judgment of 10 November 2022 available at: [hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-220989%22%5D%7D](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-220989%22%5D%7D) (30.01.2026); See also national research Meysen T. (editor) *Kindschaftssachen und häusliche Gewalt. Umgang, elterliche Sorge, Kindeswohlgefährdung, Familienverfahrensrecht*, Heidelberg: SOCLES 2021, available at: [www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/185888/804264351973903018ba213d1bd73a5a/kindschaftssachen-und-haeusliche-gewalt-data.pdf](https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/185888/804264351973903018ba213d1bd73a5a/kindschaftssachen-und-haeusliche-gewalt-data.pdf) (30.01.2026).

<sup>11</sup> See Principles 3 and 10.

## Principle 2: The Child as an Independent Rights Holder

Every human is inherently free and equal in dignity and rights from birth. Throughout their life, each child has autonomous entitlements as a rights holder. States shall ensure that every child, regardless of family composition, country of birth, residency status, social standing, or legal parentage, can unreservedly claim and benefit from all rights outlined in the UNCRC<sup>12</sup> and other international legal instruments. When rights conflict, child protection must take precedence.

States shall develop child-friendly justice systems that guarantee access to fair and effective remedies<sup>13</sup> as well as meaningful child participation<sup>14</sup>, which includes the understanding of all relevant information. It should further be considered to appoint a separate representative to inform the child of the ongoing process and possible consequences in a timely and appropriate way, as well as represent the child in a proceeding.<sup>15</sup>

Hearing children in general requires special attention. Children are to be heard neither as witnesses nor as a party to the proceedings. This is particularly important in child custody cases following family violence, as children are heavily burdened by the experience. When a child is involved in criminal proceedings, questioning should be conducted in a way that does not harm the child.<sup>16</sup>

Courts and professionals should give weight to children's views corresponding with their age and maturity. Children's perspectives ought to be included in every judicial and extrajudicial matter affecting them, with decisions based not only on the child's opinion but also on a professional assessment of their best interests. Hearing a child in cases of cross-border family violence requires specialised knowledge due to the additional complexities the child might face. These can include separation from a parent across international borders, increased reliance on their carer, living in an unfamiliar environment, and speaking a different language. Professionals interviewing children should be qualified, experienced, and undergo regular training. For cases where the child is not present in the country of proceedings, flexible tools should be used in accordance with common practice and existing conventions, including, if appropriate, video hearings.<sup>17</sup> Psychological expert opinions or family reports from suitably qualified professionals can aid in determining the weight to give to the child's views.

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<sup>12</sup> Regarding family violence, relevant UNCRC rights include protection and well-being in Arts. 3(2), 19(1), non-separation from parents in Art. 9(1), shared parental responsibility and access to eligible child services in Art. 18(1),(2), and an adequate standard of living for the child's development in Art. 27(1).

<sup>13</sup> During its 95th session in January 2024, the Committee on the Rights of the Child decided on a general comment on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies, available at: [www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/draft-general-comment-no-27-childrens-right-access](https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/draft-general-comment-no-27-childrens-right-access) (30.01.2026).

<sup>14</sup> Art. 12 UNCRC; e.g. through education on family violence and child rights, availability of counselling and support from social and other services.

<sup>15</sup> Albeit only in force in twenty states, the 1996 European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (ETS No. 160) promotes a wide range of procedural rights for children.

<sup>16</sup> For basic requirements in implementing the right to be heard, see General comment N°12 (2009) The right of the child to be heard Art. 132 – 134, available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/671444?v=pdf> (30.01.2026).

<sup>17</sup> See e.g.: Regulation (EU) 2020/1783 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2020 on cooperation between the courts of the Member States in the taking of evidence in civil or commercial matters.

### Principle 3: Intersectionality

Recognising and addressing intersectionality in the context of family violence is essential for developing inclusive and effective policies, strategies, and programmes to support individuals and dismantle the multiple layers of oppression that contribute to their vulnerability. Intersectionality is inherent to any cross-border family situation.

States need to ensure that laws and policies related to family violence are culturally responsive and do not discriminate against anyone, regardless of their gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion, disability<sup>18</sup>, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, language, nationality, ethnicity, visa status, or cultural background.<sup>19</sup> Different forms of inequality are mutually reinforcing and often create compounded vulnerabilities. In a cross-border situation, national strategies must consider the practical and legal barriers intersectionality presents and ensure, for example, the availability of translation and interpretation services in family violence support programmes. Due attention should be paid to systemic inequalities and the trauma of abuse that parents and children from minority or marginalised backgrounds often face in the context of cross-border family violence, which can impact access to resources, support, and justice. States should proactively address residence-related vulnerabilities by considering sustainable visa options that secure protection for victims of family violence who fear deportation.<sup>20</sup>

Cross-cultural and specialist family support programs can be employed to develop effective solutions in cases where the rights of the child are potentially compromised by differing cultural perceptions and understandings of family violence. Such professional support can complement the State's effort by providing culturally responsive practice and support to assist families in cases where multiple inequalities intersect.

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<sup>18</sup> Children with disabilities have the same rights as those without disabilities, however they may require additional support, resources, assistance aids to ensure their rights are fully realised. These rights are addressed especially in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Art. 7 – Children; Art. 16 - Violence and Abuse) and the UNCRC (Art. 23).

<sup>19</sup> See also Art. 4 Istanbul Convention.

<sup>20</sup> Art. 59 Istanbul Convention.

## Principle 4: The Best Interests of the Child

In all matters involving children, including cases of family violence, the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration.<sup>21</sup> It is a threefold concept: a substantive right of the child, a fundamental interpretative legal principle, and a procedural rule.<sup>22</sup>

States must respect international conventions and bilateral agreements protecting children to guarantee the child's best interests. They shall encourage and strengthen international cooperation and communication in situations of cross-border family violence when assessing the best interests of the child. The best interests assessment (BIA) shall be carried out using interdisciplinary methods, utilising the expertise of multiple professionals, to achieve the specialised approach necessary to address the inherent complexity. Social welfare institutions and courts should receive support and advice from experts across various disciplines and countries. This includes collaboration with organisations of uncontested competence, such as ISS.<sup>23</sup>

Authorities must pay special attention to where family violence has an international dimension. In addition to factors such as socio-cultural background, language barriers, traditional and educational practices, and the involvement of different jurisdictions and delays in collecting information, distance alone can pose challenges. A BIA requires the child's participation with due regard to the child's opinion. Professionals must be equipped to competently assess and respond to the needs of the party or child residing abroad within a reasonable timeframe. Where protection measures are being considered, their realistic implementation in another country must be evaluated. This includes the actual capacity of the other jurisdiction to respond to and prevent future violence. Courts shall provide protection orders with as much contextual information as possible. To be effective, they must be enforceable in the child's state of habitual residence.<sup>24</sup>

The best interests principle is crucial because it requires balancing the need to protect the child and/or the victim parent from violence and the right of the child to maintain contact with parents and relatives, unless restricted by court order. Maintaining contact across borders can be challenging due to distance and time zones. To prevent inadequate interventions that could cause further short- and long-term harm to the child, professionals involved in cross-border family violence cases – including lawyers, judges, social workers, mediators, police, and other experts – should undergo regular specialised training and professional development<sup>25</sup> to support their BIA and decisions.

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<sup>21</sup> Art. 3(1) UNCRC; General comment N° 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, para. 73 and 81.

<sup>22</sup> General comment N°14 (2013): The right to have the child's best interests taken as a primary consideration, para. 3.

<sup>23</sup> In over 100 years of practice, ISS has developed casework methods aimed to handle the special challenges of cross-border exchange of information and cooperation and is worldwide accepted, for example, as Body of "uncontested competence", see the Explanatory Report by Paul Lagarde to the HCCH 1996 Child Protection Convention, No. 140 to Art. 31, available at: <https://www.hcch.net/en/publications-and-studies/details4/?pid=2943> (30.01.2026).

<sup>24</sup> Within the EU measures are based on Art. 27(5) of the Council Regulation (EU) 2019/1111; Also see C&Rs of the 2023 SC, para. 23 ff., available at: <assets.hcch.net/docs/5b48f412-6979-4dc1-b4c1-782fe0d5cfa7.pdf> (30.01.2026).

<sup>25</sup> Professionals should keep in mind that one parent may be far away and need time to provide information. Therefore, protection must cover what is necessary for the moment without hastily deciding on the other parent's rights unless this

## Principle 5: Prevention

Family violence must be prevented as a matter of priority, with coordinated action at all levels being a shared societal responsibility.<sup>26</sup> It must be pursued through a systemic, interdisciplinary, and proactive approach that considers the specific challenges of cross-border situations.

States must adopt structural measures to prevent family violence in both domestic and cross-border contexts. This includes tackling broader social issues that may increase vulnerability to violence, such as housing shortages, limited accessibility to services, and social exclusion. In this regard, prevention is both a matter of public policy and of social equity. Preventing family violence in cross-border situations requires early intervention mechanisms that allow for timely responses and the identification of risk factors. Victims – especially those residing outside their home country – may be particularly vulnerable due to isolation, lack of support networks, and dependency. Perpetrators may use these vulnerabilities to exert control. This calls for active countermeasures, including integration support, open lines of communication, and guaranteed access to essential services.

States should ensure the widespread availability of shelters, counselling centres, helplines, and early warning systems. These services must be accessible to all individuals at risk, regardless of their nationality or place of residence.

Authorities and professionals must be trained to recognise signs of family violence at an early stage and to respond effectively, especially where family violence intersects with cross-border family life. This requires awareness of cultural differences, language barriers, and the unique pressures experienced by families living across jurisdictions. Prevention also requires long-term efforts to shift cultural norms and address harmful behaviours. Public awareness campaigns – especially those targeting young people – are essential. These campaigns should address the root causes of violence, including gender-based stereotypes, exaggerated masculinity, and tensions that may arise in intercultural relationships.<sup>27</sup>

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is necessary. They should however be preliminary decision. Next steps should be explained to both parents.

<sup>26</sup> Art. 12 Istanbul Convention.

<sup>27</sup> Art. 12-14 Istanbul Convention.

## Principle 6: Detection and Screening

The hidden nature of family violence can often pose a challenge in providing evidence. This is exacerbated particularly if the persons involved are in different countries or the alleged violence occurred in another country. Differences in perceptions of family violence, as well as methods of reporting, investigating, and evidencing such violence, increase difficulties in this regard.

Detection and screening of family violence should embrace the comprehensive definition of family violence, recognising not only overt forms such as physical and verbal abuse, but also more subtle forms of coercive control such as psychological, emotional, financial, or technology-facilitated abuse. Promoting a comprehensive definition is particularly important in cross-border settings, as victims may be disempowered and lack societal support to report subtle forms of family violence.

States, courts, and child protection authorities dealing with cross-border cases need to ensure adequate risk assessment and ongoing screening for family violence. Given that the consequences of unseen violence have a greater impact than the investigation of false allegations, any allegations need to be comprehensively analysed and assessed, despite the potential time delays inherent, even if this is due to cross-border cooperation.<sup>28</sup> All parties have the right to express their views, including through technological means, and to have their perspectives given equal weight, without discrimination against a party unable to appear in person before the court. Adequate investigation, including the examination of credible evidence and testimonies, is paramount to identifying family violence, which often goes underreported due to fear, shame, or other barriers. The overwhelming prevalence of actual instances of abuse warrants a more concerted effort to address and prevent such incidents, rather than diverting attention to concerns about false reporting.<sup>29</sup> Alleged victims need to be treated with respect and trust, receiving the necessary support and protection.

Likewise, it is important to safeguard the rights of the accused. When designing and implementing criminal law, states and their institutions shall strike a balance between measures protecting the rights of suspects and accused and, on the other hand, facilitating investigation and prosecuting crime. Fundamental principles such as the right to an effective remedy and a fair trial, the presumption of innocence and right of defence, as well as the principles of legality and proportionality of criminal offences and penalties, must be guaranteed.

Professionals should ensure culturally sensitive practices in cross-border situations, while courts and child welfare authorities should make use of specialised services - such as ISS- which possesses the expertise to manage inter-country and cultural challenges.

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<sup>28</sup> Art. 28 Istanbul Convention; Special procedural requirements in HCCH child abduction cases, may hamper assessing allegations of family violence. The Best Practice Guide, a result of the [EU-project POAM](#), provides solutions, available at: [research.abdn.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/05/Best-Practice-Guide\\_POAM.pdf](https://research.abdn.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/05/Best-Practice-Guide_POAM.pdf) (30.01.2026) p. 31 ff.

<sup>29</sup> 1 in 3 (30,7% of) women in the EU experienced physical violence or threats and/or sexual violence over their lifetime since the age of 15, 1 in 6 have experienced sexual violence (including rape and other unwanted sexual acts), 1 in 5 have faced physical or sexual violence from their partner, a relative or another member of their household and 1 in 3 have been sexually harassed at work (ratio for younger women: 2 in 5), see Eurostat survey in cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, published 25.11.2024, available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2024/eu-gender-violence-survey-key-results> (30.01.2026).

## Principle 7: Protection

Protecting individuals, particularly women and children, from violence is a paramount principle for safeguarding human rights. States are responsible for protecting children from all forms of violence, injury, abuse, neglect, negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation.<sup>30</sup> This shall not be compromised in cross-border situations or considered secondary to the rights of parents<sup>31</sup> or other family members. Cross-border specific risk factors such as parental separation and economic dependence may exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and increase the risk of family violence.

States are obligated to establish child protection systems that can intervene ex officio to protect children in emergency situations. It is crucial that warning signs of violence are identified early by child-protection actors and other professionals, such as social services and courts, and that families receive specialised assistance, beginning with understandable access to resources and information. Protection and support services must be sufficiently equipped to meet these needs.

In addition, appropriate and timely support in cross-border family conflicts may prevent cases of international child abduction. Children may face complex situations involving not only violence, but also separation, or the fear of separation, from familiar surroundings. A change of environment can make seeking help more difficult and increase vulnerability as well as dependence on the only present parent. When a parent goes into hiding for their safety across national borders, a balance should be found between sharing information and victim protection. To this end, while the exact address of the hiding parent and the child should not be disclosed by courts or any other authority, general information on their whereabouts allows the left-behind parent to apply for clarification.

When exploring the adoption of ex officio temporary protection measures, courts shall consider the specifics of cross-border situations to ensure the safety of victims and persons at risk. Where family violence is proven, any measure must consider the cross-border scenario in which it will produce its effects.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, in other child endangerment situations, a variety of flexible legal and social protection measures should be adopted on a case-by-case basis to effectively ensure the safety of the child.<sup>33</sup> Specialised assistance for families in cross-border family violence cases requires appropriate training, particularly concerning the rights and needs of child witnesses.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, parents should not feel left alone or judged in situations of conflict but rather supported by professionals such as through counselling services, shelters, legal aid, and crisis hotlines. Information must be available in plain and child-friendly language. This also enables members of multinational and migrant families to understand their situation and rights to seek interdisciplinary advice and support.

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<sup>30</sup> Art. 19 UNCRC; All children have the right to grow up in safe, nurturing environments, free from violence, see Preamble and Art. 6 UNCRC. The right to protection by their family, society and the State is based on their status as a minor, see Art. 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966).

<sup>31</sup> This includes underage parents as well.

<sup>32</sup> In recent years, this issue has received increasing attention, particularly in HCCH work on child abduction. Notably, the 2023 SC addressed this in its C&Rs (27–34) supra 2; see also the EU-project POAM Best Practice Guide supra 28.

<sup>33</sup> Restraining orders, safe shelters, socio-educational support etc. directed at adults can also affect the child.

<sup>34</sup> Art. 26 Istanbul Convention.

## Principle 8: Contact Rights

In cases of family violence, multiple rights can be impacted and in conflict, such as the rights of the child to maintain contact with both parents and to protection from danger, the right of the parent affected by violence to physical and psychological integrity, and the contact rights of the (alleged) perpetrator.

Courts and youth welfare professionals must always consider family violence, including indications as well as substantiated incidents, in their decision-making process.<sup>35</sup> A violent parent's genuine affection for their child and their sincere desire for contact does not automatically mean that such contact is in the child's best interests. Instead, this must be carefully assessed, given the history of violence, and the ongoing risk and burden faced by both the child and other family members.<sup>36</sup> Assuming a risk to the child requires a sufficiently reliable prognosis in each case. Hence, even where there is only an initial suspicion, temporary protection measures – such as suspending or limiting contact or contact supervised by professionals – may be necessary to enable a thorough clarification process. In cross-border situations, however, this process might take longer, resulting in a more extended separation from the alleged perpetrator. Decision makers should pay special attention to this aspect.

Additionally, perpetrator intervention programs can be decisive in preventing recidivism and safely rebuilding family relations.<sup>37</sup> Authorities are increasingly implementing these programs, and in doing so, they should consider referral pathways as well as financial support. As an additional outcome, specialist reports on and assessments of perpetrators may contribute to evidence-based decision-making by courts and authorities. Identifying a secure approach for managing any future engagement of the parent responsible for the violence with the child, creating awareness and acceptance of the different perspectives, supporting social rehabilitation, and addressing patriarchal and suppressing structures are key in fighting family violence holistically.

Where contact is deemed possible, any personal encounter shall occur in a safe space. Professional support and social services play a crucial role in supervised visitation by ensuring children's and adults' safety and well-being. Arrangements should consider the reality of the visiting parent regarding distance, travel costs, contact duration, and frequency. Cross-border cases often encourage the use of digital means to facilitate contact. However, a digital reunion with a violent parent may also trigger distressing memories, emotions, or images and could pose a risk of technologically facilitated abuse.

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<sup>35</sup> For 'Custody, visitation rights and safety' see Art. 31 Istanbul Convention.

<sup>36</sup> For 'Risk assessment and risk management' see Art. 51 Istanbul Convention.

<sup>37</sup> The European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (WWP EN) unites experts from perpetrator programmes, research institutes, and victim support services, see: [www.work-with-perpetrators.eu/](http://www.work-with-perpetrators.eu/) (30.01.2026); The Duluth Model is a widely used approach to addressing domestic violence, developed in the 1980s in Duluth, Minnesota, which emphasises accountability, education, and group-based intervention for perpetrators, focusing on changing behaviours rather than just treating anger, available at: [www.theduluthmodel.org/](http://www.theduluthmodel.org/) (30.01.2026); Kelly L. and Westmarland N. Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes: Steps Towards Change, Project Mirabal Final Report, London Metropolitan University and Durham University, 2015, available at: <https://projectmirabal.co.uk/publications-research-tools/> (30.01.2026).

## Principle 9: Non-refoulement

The principle of non-refoulement is a fundamental tenet upholding the unique commitment to safeguarding individuals' well-being and dignity.<sup>38</sup> Victims of family violence shall not be returned to a place where they face danger and or a risk of renewed violence.<sup>39</sup> Whether that risk arises from the state or its failure to provide adequate protection, returning a child to a place where they may be at risk, or directly to the home of an abusive parent without sufficient safeguards for the child's safety, would conflict with the rights of the child. Although family law and immigration law interplay in many cases, legal systems often fail to provide seamless protection.<sup>40</sup> States shall protect victims of violence under residence law<sup>41</sup>, e.g., by allowing the child and their parent to stay in the country of refuge.

The legal mechanisms at the intersection of international child abduction law and international refugee law seem to have conflicting objectives and no explicit link, but in practice, often intertwine.<sup>42</sup> The HCCH 1980 Child Abduction Convention aims to grant a child's prompt return to their state of habitual residence, where custody and other disputed issues may be resolved. Only when there is a grave risk that the child's return would expose the child to physical or psychological harm or otherwise place the child in an intolerable situation can a court decide against the return.<sup>43</sup> Although the success of a refugee application should not automatically trigger an exemption from return<sup>44</sup>, the courts should duly acknowledge this factor.

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<sup>38</sup> Art. 33 of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) and Art. 3 ECHR establish the prohibition of refoulement and deportation. The principle of non-refoulement is firmly rooted in international human rights law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention Against Torture, as well as various regional treaties and agreements. At the intersection to family violence, non-refoulement is referred to in the Istanbul Convention.

<sup>39</sup> Art. 61 Istanbul Convention.

<sup>40</sup> See for example Arnold, S. and Heiderhoff, B. Children in Migration and International Family Law, University of Münster, Springer Cham, 2015 available at: [link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-71598-3#](https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-71598-3#) (30.01.2026) and other deliverables of the FAMIMOVE Project on the intersection between EU migration law and PIL family law, available at: [famimove.unimib.it](https://famimove.unimib.it) (30.01.2026).

<sup>41</sup> Art. 59 Istanbul Convention.

<sup>42</sup> Council of Europe Gender-based Asylum Claims and Non-refoulement: Art. 60 and 61 of the Istanbul Convention, 2019, p. 21, available at: [rm.coe.int/conventionistanbularticle60-61-web/1680995244](https://rm.coe.int/conventionistanbularticle60-61-web/1680995244) (24.10.2025); Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada Chairperson Guidelines 4: Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender-Related Persecution, A.I.3, 1996, available at: [perma.cc/MW3C-RTWF](https://perma.cc/MW3C-RTWF) (30.01.2026); UK Home Office Gender issues in the asylum claim, V3, 2018, p. 16, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gender-issue-in-the-asylum-claim-process](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gender-issue-in-the-asylum-claim-process) (30.01.2026).

<sup>43</sup> More information on the 'grave risk exemption' in the HCCH Guide to Good Practice under the Child Abduction Convention: Part VI – Article 13(1)(b), 2020, available at: [www.hcch.net/en/news-archive/details/?varevent=725](https://www.hcch.net/en/news-archive/details/?varevent=725) (30.01.2026).

<sup>44</sup> M.A.A. v. D.E.M.E., 2020 ONCA 486, Canada: Court of Appeal for Ontario, 29 July 2020; G. v. G., 2021 Court of Appeal of England and Wales, UKSC 9, on appeal from 2020 EWCA Civ 1185 JUDGMENT; the topic has been discussed in the 2023 SC more information see Prel doc No 16, see: <https://assets.hcch.net/docs/66b0ee04-cf93-4862-bf40-4eed6a7f32ef.pdf> (30.01.2026).

## Principle 10: Legal Equity

Equal access to justice helps to ensure legal equity in cross-border family conflicts. States should have systems to refer parties to experts in private international law and provide free legal advice, as well as other culturally sensitive support services. States should ensure that information on legal aid and complaint mechanisms in family violence situations is available in an understandable way.<sup>45</sup> This enables members of multinational and migrant families to comprehend their situation and rights and seek legal advice.

States shall ensure equitable access to means-tested legal aid. Access to free legal services should not be determined by nationality, habitual residence, or the role played by the parties in the family conflict. In this regard, the legal service should be neutral and offer cross-border expertise with access to interpreters where needed. Parties should further be supported in their eligibility for legal aid in a foreign country.

For the specific scenario of international child abduction, this means that even when a parent flees to another country with their child to escape family violence, their right to access justice should not be limited due to their potential role as the abducting parent. In the case of return to the state of origin, legal support should be in place for any subsequent legal proceedings.<sup>46</sup> Courts are encouraged to use simple and straightforward language for the information to be translated in a way that is understandable for the parties in the proceedings.

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<sup>45</sup> Art. 21 Istanbul Convention.

<sup>46</sup> For instance, during return, contact, and parental responsibility proceedings.

## Principle 11: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Cross-border family conflicts, by nature, bring into play particular tensions due to, for example, the geographic distance of one parent, a child abduction, or the lack of a binding international legal framework. In situations where part of the family is separated across borders and there is a genuine risk for the child to lose contact with one parent, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), including mediated settlements, can be more constructive and effective than court-imposed arrangements. Such arrangements, in fact, might lack legal enforceability or practicality in another country. Dialogue is sometimes the only way to restore family links at a distance and reach agreements that enable both parents to participate in their children's education and development.<sup>47</sup>

The Istanbul Convention, along with most national laws, prohibits mandatory ADR – including conciliation and mediation – in situations involving family violence.<sup>48</sup> However, ADR should not be entirely dismissed, as it can still offer benefits in this context if it is adapted to the specifics of each case and the parties agree.

Courts and central authorities should facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation with specialised services which may pave the way for ADR. States should provide training and workshops to disseminate tools and best practices to ensure ongoing risk assessment for violence during mediation, and establish referral mechanisms for perpetrators (e.g., therapy, groups).

Contemporary mediation models include starting with an individual meeting, during which the mediator uses screening and assessment tools to identify potential family violence events.<sup>49</sup> Having developed into a sound and user-friendly system, online mediation is a useful tool for facilitating cross-border mediation. Digital technology may enhance a sense of safety where there has been family violence, and thus the capacity to engage in productive conversations. Different models, such as legally assisted mediation, shuttle mediation, and support persons in a mediation may be used in cases of family violence to address power imbalances. The child, as an independent rights holder, may be included in mediation processes where it is safe and appropriate.<sup>50</sup> Specialised skills and professional judgement are required in facilitating ADR to ensure that clear expectations and boundaries are in place to safeguard the process for participants. In cases where strong tensions remain at play or where the process cannot transform aggressive behaviours and polarised positions, mediation must be suspended.

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<sup>47</sup> For general information on the use of ADR in cross-border family conflicts ISS has developed the booklet *Resolving Family Conflicts - A Guide to International Family Mediation*, available in several languages at: [iss-ssi.org/international-family-mediation/](https://iss-ssi.org/international-family-mediation/) (30.01.2026); Further information available at: [www.ifm-mfi.org](http://www.ifm-mfi.org) (30.01.2026).

<sup>48</sup> Art. 48 Istanbul Convention (if one parent does not agree, ADR cannot start or continue).

<sup>49</sup> E.g. visit the DOORS (Detection Of Overall Risk Screen) Portal available at: [familydoors.com/](https://familydoors.com/) (30.01.2026).

<sup>50</sup> The latest professional guide on international family mediation in IPCA cases, *International Family Mediation in the Best Interest of the Child*, provides guidance and a wealth of practical tools regarding the inclusion of children in the mediation process (p.29-43), available at: [https://www.defenceforchildren.it/easyUp/file/dci\\_icare-web\\_eng.pdf](https://www.defenceforchildren.it/easyUp/file/dci_icare-web_eng.pdf) (30.01.2026).

## Principle 12: Durable Solutions

In cross-border family violence scenarios, professionals must think beyond immediate legal responses and operational challenges. Durable solutions can help ensure the long-term safety of children and families impacted by family violence. Prompt protection measures, alongside appropriate and practical ongoing support, foster a better understanding and implementation of decisions. Hence, the escalation of violence and conflict due to further relocation and protracted legal disputes may be prevented. However, professionals should be aware that finding these durable solutions might take considerable time, and interim solutions may be necessary.

States and courts should ensure that decisions made abroad are promptly recognised and enforced to avoid unnecessary delays. Professionals shall commit to durable solutions and consider practical factors such as time and costs. Funding for durable solutions must be equitable, with all parties contributing to cross-border family arrangements according to their capacity.

When decisions have been made in one country, services such as ISS can help families understand the practical implications and find appropriate ways to implement them. They can also assist in longer-term support and planning for the welfare of children and families impacted by cross-border family violence. Furthermore, these organisations can offer follow-up support to keep families safe and their relationships healthy.

## Principle 13: Family Violence Safety Plans

It must be recognised that relocation abroad and child abduction are sometimes protective strategies employed by one parent to escape family violence. While aiming to ensure their safety, parents might overlook other aspects of their child's best interests. Consequently, authorities face conflicting priorities, such as responding to a child abduction, while also safeguarding the safety of the adult victim and the child involved.

Recognising that family violence poses serious threats to the well-being of children and their parents, this principle emphasises the importance of a multi-faceted approach that combines strategic planning with strong networks to build a safety net capable of reducing risks and promoting resilience.<sup>51</sup> In a cross-border case, these networks must operate in two countries and can be difficult to establish or sustain.

Legal systems should strengthen cooperation at the judicial and social work levels to ensure the procedural enforcement of safety plans in each country. Victims and their personal networks must be involved in designing a comprehensive and tailored safety plan that promotes a sense of agency for those seeking help. Additionally, friends, family, and case managers attuned to changes in behaviour, signs of distress, or isolation can be crucial in initiating timely interventions.

Organisations like ISS can serve as a resource for courts and social services to exchange information and collaborate on the support network in the other State. Safety plans should also be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect evolving practices.

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<sup>51</sup> Art. 22 Istanbul Convention.

## Principle 14: Cooperation

Effective cooperation and collaboration among various disciplines and states are crucial to addressing the complexities of cross-border cases involving family violence. This requires coordination between states, non-governmental organisations, and social service providers.

An interdisciplinary approach is crucial in developing a strong support system capable of addressing the complex needs of families and preventing further harm. Focused on counselling and support, social work can offer vital emotional and practical help. Psychology and counselling assist victims in recovering from trauma and aim to tackle the underlying causes of violence. Legal experts and government bodies ensure that the legal rights of all parties are protected and offenders are held responsible for their actions. Mediation, where suitable, can reduce tensions and enable parents to better understand the needs of their children. Healthcare professionals and teachers can spot and record signs of abuse, often acting as the first line of defence. In addition, sociologists provide essential insights into drivers of family violence and effective prevention strategies.

Recognising the many ways in which State and non-state actors can intervene in such cases, effective communication among stakeholders is essential, especially across borders. Good communication enhances the effectiveness of individual actions and facilitates the sharing of knowledge, strategies, and resources.

Courts and other actors should recognise and utilise cross-border cooperation mechanisms to achieve the best possible outcomes. These opportunities exist at both judicial and social work levels.<sup>52</sup> Courts and professionals should be aware that methods of collecting and managing evidence vary between jurisdictions. Therefore, it is essential to ensure the purpose of the request and the process for providing information (evidence, affidavits, etc.) are clear to the other country.

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<sup>52</sup> For child abduction and child protection issues, among others, the cooperation via Central Authorities under the HCCH Conventions, the International Hague Network of Judges ([IHNJ](#)), and the European Judicial Network ([EJN](#)). For social work, among others, the ISS global network, which counts partners in over 120 countries, [Missing Children Europe](#), and [LEPCA](#).

## Principle 15: Data Collection, Research, and Advocacy

Research is crucial for better understanding, addressing, and preventing family violence across borders. Growing comprehensive cross-border research is essential to fill existing gaps in knowledge and grasp the complex dynamics of family violence in a transnational setting. This comparative approach, which considers the cultural, legislative, and social specifics of different countries involved, is vital for developing new tools, adapting existing strategies, and responding to current challenges.

Data collection and thorough comparative analysis are required to understand the full extent and prevalence of cross-border family violence. A detailed assessment of specific contexts would deepen the understanding of the risk factors linked to cross-border family violence and shed light on resilience mechanisms or barriers that prevent victim protection.

In the context of international child abduction, further research is needed to examine the impact of returning to the country where the violence occurred and how it affects the child's well-being.<sup>53</sup> It is important to investigate this dynamic to better understand the potential harm to the child's mental, emotional, and physical health and to evaluate the support measures that can be put in place to reduce and prevent these effects. A major concern is the lack of follow-up research after courts decide on a course of action in cross-border family disputes and issue orders. Such follow-up could assess how effective those orders have been and whether court decisions have led to meaningful outcomes for children, families, and individuals.

Thorough research can form the basis for effective advocacy, which plays an important role in this context. Global awareness is vital for shaping national and international institutions' public policies, legislation, and practices. Through strategic, evidence-based advocacy, it is possible to increase decision-makers' awareness about the need to put measures in place that adequately safeguard victims, particularly children, in cases of cross-border family violence.

By combining thorough research with strategic advocacy, existing challenges can be addressed more effectively, helping to prevent family violence globally. Countries should fund and support data collection, ideally through a centralised IT system, adapt statistical frameworks to better understand cross-border family conflicts including violence, all while ensuring compliance with data protection laws.<sup>54</sup> Such efforts would lay a vital foundation for finding sustainable, worldwide solutions.

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<sup>53</sup> While the ongoing research (see for instance Freeman M. The Effects and Consequences of International Child Abduction, *Family Law Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 3, 1998, p. 603–21; Freeman M. Parental Child Abduction: The Long-Term Effects, *International Centre for Family Law, Policy, and Practice*, 2014) has shed some light on the impact of abduction as such on the child, only more recently has research begun to examine the intersection of violence and abduction: Freeman M., Taylor N. Where International Child Abduction Occurs Against a Background of Violence and/or Abuse, *International Centre for Family Law, Policy, and Practice*, 2024: [www.hague-mothers.org.uk/document/where-international-child-abduction-occurs-against-a-background-of-violence-and-or-abuse/](http://www.hague-mothers.org.uk/document/where-international-child-abduction-occurs-against-a-background-of-violence-and-or-abuse/) (30.01.2026).

<sup>54</sup> Art. 11 Istanbul Convention.

## Glossary

This glossary defines and explains key terms used throughout these Principles. It ensures a shared understanding of core legal, social, and child protection concepts relevant to all stakeholders.

Definitions are drawn from international legal instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Istanbul Convention, and the HCCH Conventions.

For country-specific terms, consult national legislation.

<p><b>Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)</b></p>	<p>A range of methods used to resolve disputes outside of traditional court litigation. It includes processes like mediation, arbitration, conciliation, negotiation, and transaction. All ADR methods aim to help parties reach amicable solutions.</p>
<p><b>Child Protection Actors and Welfare Authorities</b></p>	<p>Individuals, organisations, and public bodies responsible for preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children. Operating at local, national, and international levels, they mainly include child welfare departments, social services, law enforcement, judicial systems, NGOs, community groups, social and para-social workers, healthcare professionals, and teachers. These actors assess needs, provide services, and ensure the protection and well-being of children. In cross-border situations, they play a vital role in risk assessment, implementing protective measures, supporting victims, and co-operating with foreign authorities. Their responsibilities may include initiating care proceedings, supervising contact arrangements, and facilitating the safe return of children in international abduction cases.</p>
<p><b>Contact Rights</b></p>	<p>Legal entitlements of children and their parents or guardians to maintain personal contact following separation or divorce. These rights ensure that children can maintain meaningful connections with parents or other significant caregivers through scheduled visits or (tele-) communication. Often used synonymously with 'right of access' and 'visitation rights', these terms are governed by the child's best interests and any applicable legal or protective considerations.</p>
<p><b>Cross-border</b></p>	<p>Any matter involving more than one country or jurisdiction can have cross-border implications. Not only persons but also legal issues and decisions can cross borders.</p>
<p><b>Cross-border Family Conflicts</b></p>	<p>Family conflicts involving family members across different countries and legal systems that often arise from divorce and separation, child custody issues, child abduction, and differing cultural or religious norms. In family law, cross-border cases require international cooperation, legal frameworks, and resolution mechanisms.</p>

<p><b>Family Conflict</b></p>	<p>Disagreements within a family may involve two parents, parents and their children, or parents and the extended family. Such conflicts may involve courts when the individual rights of all members are at stake or focus on family bonds, e.g., breakdown of dialogue, family tensions, educational matters, etc.</p>
<p><b>Family Violence</b></p>	<p>Any act or pattern of abusive behaviour within a family or domestic setting that results in physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or economic harm.</p> <p>Forms of Family Violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Physical Violence: Use of force that causes or risks bodily harm (e.g., hitting, slapping, choking, use of weapons).</li> <li>● Psychological and Emotional Violence: Non-physical actions that cause mental and emotional harm or distress (e.g., intimidation, humiliation, isolation, controlling behaviour).</li> <li>● Sexual Violence: Non-consensual sexual acts, including abuse, coercion, incest, or marital rape.</li> <li>● Economic / Financial Violence: Control over a person's financial resources to limit autonomy (e.g., withholding money, forbidding employment).</li> <li>● Neglect (Children): Persistent failure to meet a child's basic needs, including food, education, medical care, or supervision.</li> <li>● Coercive control: A pattern of ongoing behaviours used by one person to dominate, manipulate, and restrict the freedom of another; Unlike isolated incidents of abuse, coercive control is a sustained campaign of intimidation, degradation, isolation, and control designed to make the victim dependent and fearful.</li> <li>● Technology-facilitated abuse: Harmful actions carried out online or through digital technology.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Habitual Residence</b></p>	<p>In family law, the habitual residence of the child is crucial for determining the appropriate legal authority and applicable law to resolve disputes involving children. Although a key concept, there is no unified definition of this term in either national or in private international law. It is up to the court to determine the habitual residence of a child on a case-by-case basis. Unlike nationality or domicile, which are fixed statuses, habitual residence focuses on the actual, regular place of living, considering factors such as duration of stay, the intention to remain, and the individual's ties to the location.</p>
<p><b>International Child Abduction</b></p>	<p>The wrongful removal or retention of a child across international borders without the consent of a parent or the subject exercising parental responsibility, including the right to determine the place of residence.</p>
<p><b>Intersectionality</b></p>	<p>The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating</p>

	<p>overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage.</p>
<b>Perpetrator</b>	<p>An individual who inflicts harm, abuse, or violence on, e.g., a family member, typically a partner or child. This term encompasses all forms of family violence.</p>
<b>Perpetrator Intervention Programmes</b>	<p>These programmes are structured interventions aimed at changing the violent or abusive behaviours of individuals who have committed family violence. They promote accountability and responsibility through educational, therapeutic, and cognitive-behavioural methods. These programmes teach non-violent communication, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution skills to reduce recidivism and enhance long-term safety. Usually implemented alongside legal measures and victim support, their format and duration vary depending on the legal and social context.</p>
<b>Relocation</b>	<p>Relocation is the act of one parent or guardian moving with a child from one country to another, often following separation or divorce. This can raise legal and custodial issues, particularly when one parent seeks to relocate without the other parent's consent or when the relocation affects existing custody or visitation arrangements. Relocation cases may involve disputes over the child's best interests, parental rights, and the move's impact on the child's relationship with both parents.</p>
<b>Victim / Survivor</b>	<p>The term 'victim' is commonly used in legal and institutional contexts to recognise individuals who have experienced or witnessed violence, highlighting their rights to protection, support, and justice. In more person-centred and recovery-focused settings, the term 'survivor' is preferred because it emphasises resilience and empowerment. Both terms are valid and should be used thoughtfully, respecting the individual's preference and the context. In this document, the term 'victim' is primarily used in formal and legal contexts, while 'survivor' is used to acknowledge strength and recovery.</p>