

ENHANCING THE CAPACITY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES TO WORK WITH CONVICTED CHILDREN



Newsletter, Issue V, March 2025

Dear colleague,

Despite EU countries' efforts in diverting children from formal criminal proceedings and advancing alternative interventions, many children are still placed in detention. This highlights the need for specialised training for correctional staff, enabling them to recognise children's unique needs and vulnerabilities. With the right knowledge and skills, staff can provide meaningful support, helping these young individuals reintegrate into society and make positive life changes.

In response, we developed the [ARISACChild - Enhanced Capacity Training for Professionals Working with Convicted Children](#) - a comprehensive online training programme designed to equip correctional staff and probation officers with the skills and knowledge needed to support children in conflict with the law. Recognising the unique challenges faced by young offenders, this course takes a multisectoral and person-centered approach, emphasising collaboration, rehabilitation, and child-friendly practices.

After the successful launch of the ARISA Child's online training programme entitled "Enhanced Capacity Training for Professionals Working with Convicted Children" we held national dissemination events in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain

Training programme for working with sentenced children: new opportunities for professional development in Bulgaria

On 14 March 2025, the Center for the Study of Democracy, in partnership with the General Directorate "Execution of Sentences," held a roundtable in Sofia to officially launch the ARISA Child training programme. The event gathered 45 participants from across the correctional and probation services, along with representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, the Social Assistance Agency, the National Institute of Justice, UNICEF Bulgaria, NGOs, and the media. The training programme was introduced as a vital tool for improving the treatment of children in the justice system, particularly by supporting professionals who work directly with convicted children.

Expert speakers stressed the importance of specialised training for a wide range of professionals, including judges and prosecutors. Prof. **Iva Pushkarova** from the Bulgarian Academy of Science underscored the need for capacity building in juvenile justice, while Mr. **Lyubomir**



Krilchev of UNICEF Bulgaria highlighted the specific risks faced by children from marginalised communities. Mr. **Georgi Elenkov** (National Network for Children) emphasised that addressing the needs of children in conflict with the law also requires broader systemic support for child victims of violence. The event confirmed the strong interest in the programme and its relevance across sectors.

Challenges of the Greek Penitentiary System: Protection and Reintegration with Emphasis on Vulnerable Groups

On 10 February 2025, the Centre for European Constitutional Law – Tsatsos Foundation (CECL) hosted a national event titled “Challenges of the Greek Penitentiary System: Protection and Reintegration with Emphasis on Vulnerable Groups” at ESIEA Hall in Athens. Organised within the framework of the ARISA CHILD project, the event brought together 60 key stakeholders to discuss the pressing issues facing the Greek correctional system. A special focus was placed on children in conflict with the law, vulnerable populations, and the importance of inter-agency collaboration for successful reintegration and protection strategies.



CECL also presented the ARISA CHILD project's key outcomes, including the newly developed e-learning course aimed at strengthening the skills of correctional staff working with juvenile offenders. Attendees included representatives from the Ministries of Citizen Protection and Social Cohesion and Family Affairs, the Greek Ombudsperson, the National School of Judiciary, various detention facilities (Avlona, Thiva, Kassavetia, and Korydallos), probation services, and civil society organisations. The event offered a well-rounded platform for dialogue, sharing experiences, and reinforcing the importance of systemic support for vulnerable groups within the justice system.

Antigone Hosts National Dissemination Event on Juvenile Justice Challenges in Italy

On 14 March 2025, Antigone Association hosted a national dissemination event in Rome. The event, attended by 38 participants in a hybrid format, served to present the project's key outcomes, with a focus on the newly developed e-learning course aimed at professionals working with children in conflict with the law. **Rachele Stroppa** introduced the course and explained its structure, objectives, and multilingual availability.

The event also sparked important conversations on challenges within the juvenile justice system, including over-reliance on detention, the impact of legislative changes, and the growing number of unaccompanied foreign minors.

Contributions from educators, social workers, volunteers, lawyers, chaplains, and institutional representatives painted a concerning picture of overcrowded facilities, understaffing, insufficient educational opportunities, and declining rehabilitative efforts. Speakers criticised the shift toward punitive measures and the systemic neglect of minors' specific needs. The discussion revealed a shared frustration over limited resources, lack of coordination among services, and structural barriers to reintegration. Despite the challenges, the event closed on a hopeful note, with many professionals expressing appreciation for the e-learning tool and encouraging Antigone to facilitate further dialogue and training opportunities within the juvenile justice sector.



ARISA CHILD Dissemination Event Engages Juvenile Justice Professionals in Spain

On 19 February 2025, Crímina hosted a dynamic dissemination event in Elche, Spain. The event welcomed 51 participants—juvenile justice professionals, social workers, and NGO representatives—both in-person and online. Led by ARISA's national coordinator **Elena Fernández Castejón**, the event highlighted the project's key outcomes, particularly the launch of the ARISA e-learning course. A panel featuring **Elena Palacios Gallego** and **Francisco Nieto Fernández** sparked lively discussion on best practices and child-friendly justice, setting the tone for a day of learning, networking, and reflection.



Following the lunch break, participants explored the structure and content of the ARISA course, which offers over eight hours of tailored training for those working with minors in the justice system. The final workshop focused on training needs and policy recommendations for improving juvenile justice through rights-based, rehabilitative approaches. With enthusiastic feedback, numerous follow-up emails, and media coverage, the event not only strengthened professional networks but also underlined the urgent need for continued support and collaboration in the field.

Portugal Hosts ARISA CHILD Dissemination Event on Juvenile Justice Reform

On 13 March 2025, IPS_Innovative Prison Systems hosted a national dissemination event in Lisbon. Conducted in Portuguese, the event brought together 25 professionals from across the juvenile justice and child protection sectors in Portugal. Participants explored the project's key outcomes—particularly the launch of the new E-learning Course for juvenile justice professionals—and engaged in rich discussions around child-friendly justice. Despite some last-minute cancellations, interest remained high, reflecting the sector's commitment to strengthening practices that support young people in conflict with the law.

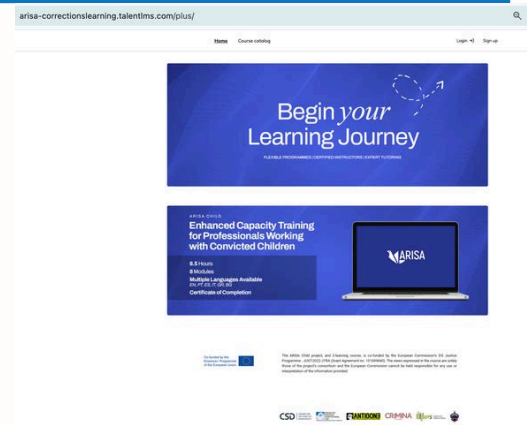


A key highlight was the Multidisciplinary Panel on Juvenile and Child-Friendly Justice, featuring four expert speakers who addressed pressing topics such as crossover youth, system coordination, and lessons learned from related projects. The event also spotlighted ARISA's Needs Analysis Report and Policy Recommendations, offering tools to support more effective, rights-based interventions. With valuable exchanges of ideas and networking among practitioners, the event reinforced the importance of continuous training and inter-agency collaboration to better serve vulnerable youth within the justice system.

If you couldn't attend the events, don't worry — you can still access the ARISA CHILD online training course and join the learning journey

 [Sign up here!](#)

Let's work together to ensure that every child in the justice system has the opportunity for rehabilitation, growth, and a brighter future! ✨



Why Join?

By enrolling in this course, correctional professionals will:

- ✓ Improve their understanding of children's rights and vulnerabilities.
- ✓ Develop effective communication techniques for engaging with young offenders.
- ✓ Gain tools to foster a supportive and rehabilitative environment.
- ✓ Strengthen multi-agency cooperation for more effective interventions.
- ✓ Learn strategies for self-care and resilience, reducing stress in demanding work environments.





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