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Abbreviations and acronyms

CA	Consortium Agreement
D	Deliverable
DoA	Description of Action
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GA	Grant Agreement
G.A	General Assembly
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IPRs	Intellectual Property Rights
KO	Kick-off
LEAs	Law Enforcement Agencies
M	Month
PC	Project Coordinator
PO	Project Officer
R&D	Research and Development
RFI	Request For Information
RP	Reporting Period
T	Task
TOC	Table of Content
TRL	Technology Readiness Levels
WP	Work Package
WPL	Work Package Leader

Executive summary

This Strategy Paper synthesises the evidence, findings and recommendations generated throughout the implementation of the FULL-PROOF project ("Ensuring the due course of criminal proceedings via strengthened respect for the procedural rights of the suspect and accused", Grant Agreement No. 101160524, EU Justice Programme, October 2024–September 2026). The project gathered qualitative and quantitative evidence - **59 interviews, a 138-response survey, seven national roundtables, two international workshops for law-enforcement authorities (LEAs), one international workshop for lawyers and one international cross-professional seminar** on the practical implementation of the EU's core procedural-rights *acquis*, particularly Directive 2012/13 (right to information), Directive 2013/48 (right of access to a lawyer) and Directive 2016/1919 (right to legal aid), across seven Member States: Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The evidence gathered throughout the project consistently points to the same underlying diagnosis: **formal transposition of the three directives is essentially complete, but functional effectiveness fails at the earliest stages of criminal proceedings** (arrest, police custody and first interrogation). The evidence suggests that the principal challenges relate not to the legal framework itself, but to its implementation, particularly regarding resources, training, professional culture and monitoring.

Four cross-cutting findings recur across the evidence base: (1) a persistent perception gap, with police officers reporting compliance while lawyers and human-rights professionals reporting structural obstacles, and prosecutors adopting an intermediate position; (2) differential vulnerability, with foreign nationals, non-native speakers, children and socio-economically disadvantaged persons being disproportionately exposed to breaches of their procedural rights; (3) legal aid as the single most structurally fragile procedural safeguard, undermined by delayed or inadequate remuneration and restrictive eligibility criteria; and (4) a consistent preference among practitioners for scenario-based, cross-professional training as the most promising means of narrowing the implementation gap.

Consortium

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1. Introduction

The European Union's framework of procedural rights for suspects and accused persons was given concrete shape by the [Council Resolution of 30 November 2009 on a Roadmap for strengthening procedural rights of suspected or accused persons in criminal proceedings](#).

The Roadmap covers six directives: [Directive 2010/64 on the right to interpretation and translation](#), [Directive 2012/13 on the right to information](#), [Directive 2013/48 on the right of access to a lawyer](#), [Directive 2016/343 on the presumption of innocence](#), [Directive 2016/800 on procedural safeguards for children](#), and [Directive 2016/1919 on legal aid](#). Together, these instruments constitute the EU's legal framework on procedural rights.

More than a decade after the adoption of these directives, the European Commission's implementation reports on Directives [2012/13](#) (right to information), [2013/48](#) (right of access to a lawyer) and [2016/1919](#) (right to legal aid) continue to identify a gap between formal transposition and practical implementation. While considerable progress has been made in formal transposition, persistent, and in some cases serious, shortcomings remain, including delays in the provision of legal aid in 22 Member States.

The FULL-PROOF project was designed to address the breaches of procedural rights occurring in the initial stages of criminal proceedings, particularly those relating to Directives 2012/13, 2013/48, and 2016/1919 (right to information, of access to a lawyer and to legal aid, respectively), with the objectives of raising awareness, generating knowledge and providing practical guidance.

2. Purpose

This Strategy Paper seeks to support the consolidation of the European Union's approach to procedural rights in criminal proceedings by translating the evidence,

lessons learned and recommendations generated through the FULL-PROOF project into a coherent strategic framework for future action. Building on the project's research findings and informed by the outcomes of other relevant EU-funded initiatives, the Strategy Paper identifies opportunities to strengthen the practical implementation of three of the Procedural Rights Directives across Member States. It proposes strategic recommendations aimed at enhancing the application of procedural safeguards, promoting the uptake of transferable good practices, and informing future policy developments at both EU and national levels to contribute to a more coherent and rights-compliant criminal justice system.

3. Methodology

The paper draws on the FULL-PROOF findings and conclusions, particularly from:

- **Interviews on breaches and practices** – 59 qualitative interviews were conducted with criminal justice professionals (public prosecutors, lawyers, police officers) and other relevant stakeholders in the seven partnership countries (Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) on the implementation of Directive 2012/13 (right to information), Directive 2013/48 (right of access to a lawyer), and Directive 2016/1919 (right to legal aid). Three additional interviews were carried out with EU-level stakeholders (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers [DG JUST] and Fair Trials) in order to integrate a broader European perspective.
- **EU Survey** – the survey received 138 valid responses from criminal justice professionals across the seven Consortium countries. Participants represented a range of professional backgrounds, including police officers, lawyers, human rights professionals, judges, prosecutors and other justice-sector practitioners. The survey examined participants' knowledge and practical experience regarding the implementation of Directives 2012/13, 2013/48 and 2016/1919, with a focus on identifying implementation challenges and areas for

improvement. Administered in English, the questionnaire included both closed- and open-ended questions. As some questions were conditional or not answered by all participants, the number of responses varies across items. Findings are therefore reported based on the relevant number of respondents for each question.

- **Cross-analysis report** – brings together the findings from the project's research activities into a comparative analysis of how procedural rights are transposed, interpreted and implemented in practice across the seven partner jurisdictions. The report draws on three complementary sources of evidence: the national baseline reports, interviews with criminal justice professionals and the consortium-wide survey.
- **Best practices replicability framework** – indexes 36 good and promising practices developed and applied in the field of the protection of procedural rights in criminal proceedings and assesses their potential for replicability in Member States.
- **National roundtables** – 7 national roundtables (in Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Poland and Italy), where the Framework for the replicability of best practices and its potential in the professionals' daily work were discussed, and participants willingness to strengthen cross-professional communication was assessed. The events were successfully conducted, involving prosecutors, lawyers, police officers and human rights experts. In total, the events gathered 56 participants – 6 prosecutors, 28 police officers, 18 lawyers and 4 human rights experts.
- **International workshops for Law Enforcement Agencies** - two cross-border workshops for Law Enforcement Authorities (LEAs). The first one took place in Bratislava, Slovakia, and the second in Bucharest, Romania. They brought together police officers, project partners and experts from the FULL-PROOF consortium, with a focus on the practical implementation of procedural rights, comparative national practices, and the challenges encountered by LEAs during the first stages of criminal proceedings. Across both events, 27 police officers participated in the workshops, together with project partner representatives. The Bratislava workshop involved 12 police officers from

Slovakia, Poland and Romania, supported by 14 partner representatives. The Bucharest workshop involved 21 participants in total, including 15 police officers and 6 project members. The combined format of expert presentations, comparative discussions, simulation-based exercises and study visits created a practical setting for cross-border dialogue and professional exchange.

- **International Workshop for Lawyers** - The international workshop took place in Sofia, Bulgaria, and focused on the lawyers' perspectives on the challenges related to the implementation of the Roadmap Directives on the right to information, access to a lawyer, and legal aid across the seven partner countries: Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The event brought together 33 participants on the first day and 32 on the second day. Participants included 19 practitioners - 12 Bulgarian, 2 Italian, 3 Portuguese, and 2 Slovenian practitioners - as well as 11 representatives of the project partners and invited keynote speakers from FRA and DG JUST.

The Strategy Paper is grounded in the evidence generated throughout the activities listed above and, as such, reflects the methodological characteristics of the underlying research. While the project draws on a substantial body of qualitative and quantitative evidence collected across seven Member States (Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) and various stakeholder groups, certain limitations should be acknowledged. Some findings may reflect the perspectives of particular professional groups more strongly than others. Furthermore, the evidence base is primarily informed by the views and experiences of criminal justice practitioners rather than by the direct experiences of suspects, accused persons or other rights-holders. The Strategy Paper should therefore be read as an evidence-informed assessment of practitioners' experiences and perspectives across the participating jurisdictions, providing a comparative basis for identifying recurring implementation challenges, good practices and areas for further action.

4. The State of Play: Formal Compliance versus Functional Effectiveness

The distinction between formal compliance (transposition of a directive into national law) and functional effectiveness (whether the right it protects is secured in practice) was adopted as the organising framework for this chapter.

4.1. Transposition and Implementation

All seven Member States examined – Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia – have transposed Directives 2012/13, 2013/48 and 2016/1919 in some form. However, the project's survey of 138 respondents revealed mixed perceptions in implementation, with respondents divided between those who considered the directives "fully implemented" and those who reported only "partial" implementation, while a smaller proportion expressed uncertainty.

This perception is corroborated at EU level: the [Commission's implementation report on Directive 2012/13](#) identifies compliance issues in several Member States, particularly regarding the Letter of Rights, the provision of information about the accusation and access to case materials. The implementation [report on Directive 2013/48](#) similarly concludes that "considerable progress" in transposition coexists with continuing difficulties in practical application of key provisions. Likewise, the [report on Directive 2016/1919](#) found compliance shortcomings in 22 Member States, notably concerning the requirement to grant legal aid without undue delay.

The project findings indicate that implementation challenges are not confined to a single procedural safeguard or jurisdiction. Across the partner countries, practitioners consistently identified difficulties relating to the timely provision of legal aid, access to interpretation and translation, the communication of procedural rights, and the practical effectiveness of access to a lawyer. Although the nature and intensity of these challenges vary between Member States, they collectively illustrate a persistent

gap between formal legal compliance and the effective enjoyment of procedural rights in practice.

Taken together, the project findings and the European Commission's implementation reports indicate that the principal challenge no longer lies in the formal transposition of the Procedural Rights Directives, but in ensuring their consistent and effective application in practice. The following sections therefore examine each procedural right individually in order to identify the principal implementation challenges in greater detail and formulate targeted recommendations.

4.2. Analysis of Each Procedural Right Directive

4.2.1. Right to Information (Directive 2012/13)

Breaches identified relate primarily to timeliness and comprehensibility rather than outright denial: information is often delivered late, in language suspects do not understand, or in a form (technical legal language) that is too complex and not accessible. This finding is consistent with the [Fundamental Rights Agency's 2019 report Rights in practice: access to a lawyer and procedural rights in criminal and European Arrest Warrant proceedings](#), which similarly found that defendants often receive minimal or unclear information about the charges against them across the eight Member States it examined.

4.2.2. Right of Access to a Lawyer (Directive 2013/48)

This is described in the [Cross-analysis report](#) as "the most recurrent and politically significant implementation fault line". Across the sample, access is more often delayed than formally denied - Bulgaria is the recorded exception, where lawyers reported instances of persons being questioned as "witnesses" while functionally suspected, without a lawyer present. Poland was twice singled out at the International Workshop for Lawyers for a gap between formal guarantees and immediate, effective access

during police questioning. The evidence also surfaces a systemic institutional distinction: Italy's *giudice per le indagini preliminari* (investigating judge, with strict exclusionary rules for unlawfully obtained evidence) and Portugal's *arguido* (defendant) status and *juiz de instrução* (investigative judge) were repeatedly cited as comparatively strong judicially-supervised models, in contrast to Bulgaria's more prosecutor-driven pre-trial architecture. This tracks the European Court of Human Rights' settled case law under Article 6 ECHR, beginning with [Salduz v. Turkey](#), judgment of 27 November 2008, which held that **access to a lawyer should, as a rule, be available from a suspect's first police interrogation absent compelling reasons to restrict it**, and refined in [Ibrahim and Others v. the United Kingdom](#), judgment of 13 September 2016, and [Beuze v. Belgium](#), judgment of 9 November 2018, both of which clarify that any restriction must not irretrievably prejudice the overall fairness of the proceedings.

4.2.3. [Right to Legal Aid \(Directive 2016/1919\)](#)

The [Cross-analysis report](#) identifies legal aid as "the most structurally vulnerable component" of the three directives. Although the legal framework governing legal aid has generally been established across the participating Member States, the project findings reveal persistent challenges affecting its effective operation in practice.

Portugal illustrates the distinction between formal compliance and functional effectiveness. While the legal aid framework is generally regarded as adequately established at the normative level, its practical effectiveness is undermined by the low and delayed remuneration of legal aid lawyers.

Similarly, the Italian national roundtable highlighted concerns regarding the rigid income-eligibility threshold of €13,659.64, which participants considered to exclude individuals with genuine legal aid needs.

These field-level findings are consistent with the [Commission's implementation report](#) on this Directive, which identified compliance shortcomings in 22 Member States, especially regarding the requirement to grant legal aid without undue delay. Taken

together, the evidence suggests that the principal challenges relating to legal aid lie not in the existence of the legal framework itself, but in ensuring its timely, accessible and effective implementation.

4.3. Vulnerable Persons

The project's findings indicate that the practical implementation of procedural rights is not experienced equally across all groups of suspects and accused persons. Foreign nationals, non-native speakers and socio-economically disadvantaged persons were repeatedly identified as disproportionately exposed to breaches of procedural rights, reflecting the additional barriers these groups may face in accessing information, legal assistance and other procedural safeguards.

Among these groups, foreign nationals emerged as a particular area of concern. Practitioners reported that they are disproportionately represented in pre-trial detention, partly because judicial risk assessments commonly take into account factors such as stable residence, employment and family ties within the country, which foreign nationals are less likely to possess. In some jurisdictions, practitioners further described the use of pre-trial detention for non-nationals as being almost automatic.

The evidence also points to other dimensions of vulnerability. While gender-related disparities were noted, they were recognised less consistently across the participating Member States than vulnerabilities associated with nationality, language or socio-economic disadvantage.

With regard to non-binary persons, practitioners generally reported having little or no experience of such cases. As a result, this dimension of vulnerability highlights an area where further evidence would be beneficial.

Children were addressed primarily through the project's analysis of transferable good practices rather than dedicated empirical research. This reflects a relative gap in the research and underscores the need for further research on the implementation of the safeguards established by Directive 2016/800.

4.4. The Perception Gap Between Police Officers, Lawyers and Prosecutors

A consistent finding across the interviews, the [Cross-analysis report](#) and the national roundtables is the divergence in professional perceptions regarding the practical implementation of procedural rights. Police officers generally reported that procedural safeguards are routinely respected in practice, whereas lawyers consistently identified structural and recurring obstacles to their effective implementation. Prosecutors typically adopted an intermediate position.

These differences in professional perception are relevant because they shape how implementation challenges are understood and prioritised.

Taken together, the project's findings indicate that weaknesses in the implementation of procedural rights have implications extending beyond the protection of individual rights. Respondents consistently associated ineffective implementation with reduced trust in the justice system, delays in criminal proceedings, unnecessary litigation, avoidable appeals and, in some cases, an increased risk of wrongful convictions. These findings reinforce the conclusion that strengthening procedural safeguards contributes not only to the protection of fundamental rights, but also to the efficiency, legitimacy and overall effectiveness of criminal justice systems. Against this background, the following chapter identifies the principal cross-cutting themes, systemic gaps and opportunities emerging from the evidence base.

5. Cross-Cutting Themes, Gaps and Opportunities

Beyond the analysis of each procedural right, the project identified six recurring structural themes. Their consistent emergence across multiple research methods, including interviews, surveys, national roundtables and international workshops, and

across different national contexts demonstrates that these are not isolated findings, but cross-cutting issues that point to common gaps and opportunities for strengthening the implementation of procedural rights across Member States.

5.1. The Suspect Status

The project identified the definition of "suspect" as a cross-cutting issue with significant implications for the effective implementation of the Procedural Rights Directives. In particular, the Bulgarian national research identified concerns regarding the point at which an individual becomes entitled to procedural safeguards. Bulgarian practitioners reported that the absence of a clear, standalone legal definition of "suspect" may delay the application of these safeguards in practice by allowing individuals who are, in practice, treated as suspects to be questioned or subjected to coercive measures before the relevant procedural rights are triggered. This concern is consistent with the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in [Case C-209/22, Rayonna prokuratura Lukovit, judgment of 7 September 2023](#), which addressed the implications of the Bulgarian legal framework for the effective exercise of defence rights during pre-trial proceedings.

The project also identified examples of national measures aimed at addressing this issue. In Slovakia, an internal Police President's Order adopted in 2025 clarifies the point at which an individual acquires suspect status.

5.2. Remedies and Monitoring

The [Cross-analysis report](#) observes that national monitoring mechanisms rely predominantly on "administrative completion metrics", such as whether the required documentation has been completed, rather than on measures capable of assessing the practical effectiveness of procedural safeguards.

One promising practice emerged from Slovenia, where the Ombudsman, acting as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), has developed a comprehensive approach to monitoring procedural safeguards. For several years, the Ombudsman has monitored the respect for procedural rights by reviewing documentation in randomly selected cases. More recently, the NPM expanded this approach by combining interviews with individuals who had recently been detained by the police with visits to 7 police stations and an examination of 50 case files. This approach enabled the monitoring process to assess not only formal compliance, but also the practical operation of procedural safeguards from the perspective of those directly affected.

This example illustrates the potential value of independent, evidence-based monitoring mechanisms that combine documentary review with first-hand evidence from individuals who have experienced police detention. Such approaches could strengthen national oversight, provide more meaningful indicators of the effective implementation of procedural rights, and contribute to a more robust EU-wide framework for monitoring compliance.

5.3. Cross-Professional Training and Capacity Building

Every practitioner-oriented activity converges on the same conclusion: recurring, scenario-based, practice-oriented training is the reform most consistently and most positively evaluated. The [Cross-analysis report](#) calls this "the single most important reform cluster." The project's international workshops further validate this approach empirically: participants reported consistently high levels of satisfaction, with overall ratings of 4.6–4.7 out of 5 in the law enforcement authorities' workshops and satisfaction levels exceeding 90% in the lawyers' workshop. In addition, 73% of participants in the lawyers' workshop reported feeling "much more confident" identifying rights under the three core directives after the training, even though 41% was already "very familiar" with them beforehand. This suggests the value of such training lies in strengthening practitioners' confidence in the practical application of procedural rights than baseline legal awareness.

The national roundtables reached the same conclusion. Across all participating Member States, practitioners identified a need for continuous, structured and practice-oriented training for police officers, lawyers, prosecutors, judges and other criminal justice professionals. Emphasis was placed on interdisciplinary training, the practical application of procedural safeguards, cooperation between professional groups and the development of high-quality training materials. At the same time, participants highlighted the importance of ensuring that training equips professionals with the specialised knowledge and skills required in areas where specific expertise is needed.

5.4. Cross-Professional Cooperation and Communication

The perception gap mentioned above is compounded by a lack of shared operational understanding between police, lawyers and prosecutors. Differences in professional roles and institutional perspectives may lead to divergent interpretations of procedural obligations, creating gaps and inconsistencies in their implementation. The evidence therefore suggests that strengthening procedural rights requires not only professional training but also closer cooperation and communication between the different actors involved in criminal proceedings.

The national roundtables highlighted the importance of inter-institutional coordination and cooperation. Participants emphasised that the effective implementation of procedural safeguards depends on continuous dialogue between criminal justice professionals and identified cross-professional training as an important mechanism for fostering improved communication. Accordingly, strengthening cross-professional cooperation therefore requires sustained institutional commitment and should be regarded as a key element of the effective implementation of procedural rights across Member States.

5.5. Legal Aid

Across the information gathered, shortcomings relating to eligibility criteria, the timely appointment of lawyers and the remuneration of legal aid providers emerged as interconnected challenges that undermine the effective exercise of the right to legal assistance. These findings suggest that legal aid should not be addressed through isolated reforms. Measures such as broadening eligibility, increasing remuneration or accelerating the appointment of lawyers are unlikely to achieve lasting improvements if pursued independently. Rather, the effectiveness of legal aid depends on the overall resilience and adequate resourcing of legal aid systems.

Strengthening legal aid therefore requires a systemic approach that ensures timely access to legal representation, fair and sustainable funding arrangements, and eligibility criteria that enable those in need to benefit from legal assistance.

As discussed previously, legal aid is not an isolated safeguard, but an enabling condition for the effective exercise of other procedural rights.

6. Guidelines on European Minimum Standards for the Practical Implementation of Procedural Rights

This chapter translates the evidence base into concrete guidance designed to support the effective implementation of procedural rights by police officers and lawyers in their day-to-day work.

6.1. For Police Officers and Law Enforcement Authorities

1. Provide information on procedural rights promptly and in a clear and accessible manner.
2. Provide the Letter of Rights in a timely, clear and simple language. Ensure that individuals receive the Letter of Rights in a language they understand and are

given an adequate opportunity to read and understand its content. Where national procedures allow, reinforce key information as proceedings progress.

3. Ensure timely access to a lawyer in accordance with national law and the Procedural Rights Directives.
4. Establish procedures to ensure timely access to qualified interpreters, including the use of remote or on-call interpreting services where appropriate, particularly during the initial stages of criminal proceedings.
5. Adapt communication to the needs of each person, particularly vulnerable persons and non-native speakers.
6. Promote regular, scenario-based training on the practical application of procedural rights. Training programmes should prioritise first interactions with suspects, the conduct of interviews, and the identification and treatment of vulnerable persons, including children, foreign nationals and persons with disabilities.
7. Ensure clear documentation procedures for key procedural stages, including arrest, the provision of information on procedural rights and access to a lawyer, to support effective monitoring and accountability.
8. Promote effective communication and cooperation with lawyers, prosecutors and other competent authorities, including through the development of joint operational guidance.

6.2. For Lawyers

1. Ensure confidential and effective consultation with clients at the earliest possible stage of the proceedings, enabling informed legal advice before questioning or other procedural acts.
2. Verify that clients have received and understood information on their rights, providing further explanation where necessary to enable informed decision-making.

3. Monitor the effective implementation of procedural safeguards throughout the proceedings and promptly challenge any breach that may affect the client's rights or the fairness of the proceedings.
4. Maintain communication with police officers, prosecutors and other relevant professionals to facilitate the timely resolution of procedural issues while safeguarding the client's rights.
5. Participate in continuous professional development and training on procedural rights, including EU law and cross-border criminal proceedings, and the knowledge and skills required to provide effective legal assistance to vulnerable clients.

6.3. General Guidelines

- Promote cross-professional training sessions for police officers, lawyers, prosecutors and other criminal justice professionals.
- Develop EU-level model templates for the Letter of Rights and promote the use of plain-language communication, drawing on identified good practices.
- Establish common minimum standards for recording key procedural data (provision of information, access to a lawyer, interpreter involvement and legal aid processing times) to support national and EU-level monitoring of the effective implementation of procedural rights.
- Strengthen independent monitoring mechanisms by combining documentary reviews with qualitative assessments to evaluate the effective implementation of procedural rights.
- Promote adequately resourced legal aid systems by addressing eligibility criteria, the timely appointment of legal aid providers and sustainable remuneration as interconnected elements of effective access to justice.
- Establish measures to ensure timely access to legal assistance through effective duty lawyer and on-call systems, particularly in rural areas and outside normal working hours.

- Ensure the availability of qualified interpreting services, including remote and on-call arrangements where appropriate, to facilitate effective communication from the earliest stages of criminal proceedings.

7. Replicating Best Practices: Legal and Practical Feasibility

While the previous chapter identified practical guidelines for strengthening the day-to-day application of procedural rights, this chapter considers how successful practices identified across the project can be realistically replicated in other Member States.

The project developed the [Best Practices Replicability Framework](#), assessing whether a good practice identified in one Member State is realistically transposable to another. The methodology plots each of 36 catalogued practices on a 3×3 matrix (replicability: easy/medium/difficult; impact: low/medium/high), scored against five replicability criteria - the extent of legislative change required beyond the EU minimum floor; budgetary implications; IT system build or integration needs; stakeholder complexity; and cross-border coordination requirements - and six impact criteria - timing (drawing on the *Salduz* case-law); coverage; compliance; effect on vulnerable groups (drawing on FRA and Council of Europe child-friendly-justice standards); defence quality; and EAW safeguards.

The assessment demonstrates that many promising practices are capable of being transferred across Member States, although their implementation requires different levels of investment and institutional commitment. Out of the 36 practices assessed, five were rated "easy" to replicate, while three of these also demonstrated high potential impact. Practices requiring no legislative amendment and modest financial investment, such as operational guidance, training initiatives or standardised documentation, generally demonstrated the highest potential for replication. By

contrast, practices dependent on structural reforms, additional funding or extensive institutional coordination were consistently assessed as more difficult to implement.

Recurring challenges include budgetary costs (staffing a hotline, funding universal free counsel, building or integrating digital case-management systems), shortages of specialised professionals (qualified interpreters, child psychologists), and the complexity of coordinating police, bar associations, judicial authorities and other relevant stakeholders. Cross-border and EAW-specific coordination adds an additional layer because it requires coordination across different national legal systems.

The assessment also suggests that good practices should not be viewed in isolation. Measures that are relatively straightforward to implement can provide the institutional and operational foundations for more complex reforms over time. A phased approach, considering national legal frameworks, available resources and institutional capacity, is therefore likely to facilitate more sustainable implementation.

A consistent message emerging from the national roundtables is that **the effective implementation of the Procedural Rights Directives should remain the primary priority for Member States**. Ensuring the full and correct application of existing EU standards is a prerequisite for the successful adoption of additional good practices. The project therefore considers baseline implementation and practical compliance to be the essential foundation upon which further reforms should be built.

The objective is not to promote uniform solutions across all Member States, but to facilitate the adaptation of successful practices to different legal and institutional contexts while maintaining the minimum standards established by EU law.

The project demonstrated that the successful transfer of good practices depends not only on their effectiveness, but also on their compatibility with national legal frameworks, institutional capacity and available resources. While no single model is suitable for all Member States, the evidence suggests that phased implementation, beginning with high-impact practices requiring limited structural change, offers the greatest potential for strengthening the effective application of procedural rights across the European Union. Ultimately, the full and practical implementation of the

Procedural Rights Directives remains the essential foundation upon which further reforms and the replication of promising practices should be built.

8. Consolidating Procedural Safeguards in Future EU Action

The preceding chapters focused on the findings of the project and their implications for national implementation. Building on that analysis, this chapter sets out strategic considerations for future EU action aimed at strengthening the effective implementation of procedural safeguards across the European Union.

The [2009 Roadmap Resolution](#) recognises that mutual trust between Member States depends not only on the approximation of legal standards but also on their effective application in practice. The evidence gathered throughout this project, considered alongside developments in the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Commission's implementation and enforcement activities, indicates that important gaps remain between formal compliance and the effective enjoyment of procedural rights.

Future EU action should therefore prioritise strengthening the effective implementation of the existing Procedural Rights Directives, while supporting Member States in addressing persistent practical and structural challenges.

8.1. Strengthening Implementation and Monitoring

- Shift the focus of implementation monitoring from formal transposition towards indicators that assess the practical effectiveness of procedural rights.
- Continue to pursue enforcement action where Member States fail to comply with their obligations under the Procedural Rights Directives.

- Promote common minimum standards for recording procedural data to support comparable national and EU-level monitoring.
- Encourage the development and resourcing of independent monitoring mechanisms, including National Preventive Mechanisms and other oversight bodies.
- Develop monitoring methodologies that incorporate multiple perspectives, including those of legal professionals and civil society, alongside official implementation data.

8.2. Supporting Member States

- Facilitate structured EU-funded peer learning and the exchange of good practices.
- Develop non-binding guidance and practical tools, such as model Letters of Rights, operational checklists and communication guidance.
- Support Member States in adapting good practices to their national legal and institutional contexts rather than promoting uniform solutions.

8.3. Strengthening Available Data

- Support comparative research on the implementation of the Procedural Rights Directives not covered in this project, particularly Directives 2010/64 and 2016/800, with a focus on interpretation services and procedural safeguards for children.
- Encourage the development of comparable indicators and evidence-based evaluation methodologies to support future policy development.
- Improve the availability of disaggregated data on underrepresented groups, including non-binary persons and other LGBTIQ+ persons, to support a better understanding of their experiences and access to procedural safeguards.

8.4. Building Professional Capacity

- Support recurring EU-funded, practice-oriented training on procedural rights in EU languages.
- Promote joint cross-professional training involving police officers, lawyers, prosecutors and other criminal justice professionals.
- Ensure that EU-supported training includes dedicated modules on vulnerable persons, cross-border cooperation and the practical application of procedural rights.

These recommendations point towards a consolidation of the existing EU procedural-rights framework. The evidence suggests that future EU action should focus on ensuring that established safeguards are consistently implemented and effective in practice, while addressing the institutional, professional and practical conditions that influence their application. This requires a combination of effective enforcement where minimum obligations remain unmet, stronger support for implementation and professional capacity, evidence-based monitoring and independent oversight, and continued exchange of practices across Member States. Such an approach would strengthen the practical operation of the existing framework while respecting the principles of minimum harmonisation and the diversity of national criminal justice systems.

9. Conclusion

The evidence assembled by the FULL-PROOF project leads to the conclusion that the European Union has succeeded in establishing a comprehensive framework of minimum procedural rights, but its practical effectiveness continues to depend on how those rights are implemented across Member States.

Closing that gap does not require redesign of the existing legislative framework or the minimum-harmonisation model on which it is based. It requires a renewed focus on the effective implementation of existing safeguards through evidence-based monitoring, sustained professional training, adequately resourced legal aid systems, strengthened cross-professional cooperation and the continued exchange of good practices. Future EU action should therefore regard the effective implementation of existing rights and the promotion of innovative practices as complementary and sequential objectives.

The recommendations set out in this Strategy Paper are intended to contribute to that objective and to support future policy development and research in this field.



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