



Executive Summary

BRIDGE Sustainability and Scale-up plan

Building and Expanding the European Youth Diversion Network
2026-2030

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The BRIDGE project (Building a Resourceful International Youth Diversion Group for Exchanging Best Practices Across Europe) was established in response to growing recognition that diversion should be a central component of child-friendly justice systems. Although international and European standards consistently promote diversion as the preferred response to children in conflict with the law wherever appropriate, its interpretation and implementation remain highly uneven across Europe.

Through cooperation between Stichting Halt (the Netherlands), Foróige (Ireland) and Terre des hommes Hellas (Greece), BRIDGE facilitated comparative learning between three distinct diversion models. The project produced a comparative Needs Assessment, an Evaluation & Research Report and a Policy Brief, while bringing together practitioners, researchers, policymakers and young people with lived experience during an international exchange meeting held on Universal Children's Day in The Hague.

A key conclusion of BRIDGE was that Europe currently lacks a dedicated platform for organisations and professionals to exchange knowledge, compare diversion systems, strengthen professional practice and jointly advance research and policy on youth diversion. While several European networks address related themes such as child-friendly justice, restorative justice and children's rights, none focus specifically on youth diversion.

This Sustainability & Scale-Up Plan presents a roadmap for formalizing and expanding the European Youth Diversion Network between 2026 and 2030. The network aims to become a sustainable European platform for cooperation, knowledge exchange, professional development and policy dialogue by bringing together practitioners, youth workers, researchers, policymakers, child rights organisations and young people with lived experience.

Guided by shared principles including children's rights, child-centred practice, youth participation, restorative justice, youth work, proportionality and evidence-informed practice, the network pursues six long-term strategic objectives: developing a shared European understanding of diversion; strengthening professional capacity; facilitating knowledge exchange and comparative learning; supporting evidence-informed policy development; embedding meaningful youth participation; and ensuring sustainable European cooperation beyond individual projects.

The network is designed as a collaborative partnership. During BRIDGE II, the founding partnership will expand to include new European organisations representing youth diversion, child rights, youth work and research. As part of this expansion, the Child-Friendly

Justice European Network (CFJ-EN) will become the long-term home of the European Youth Diversion Network by hosting its Community of Practice and digital knowledge platform, providing a sustainable infrastructure and substantially extending the network's European reach.

The Sustainability & Growth Strategy sets out how the network will remain active through continuous knowledge exchange, strategic growth, policy advocacy and future European collaboration. Many of these ambitions are already being implemented through BRIDGE II, including the development of a shared European framework on youth diversion, an EU-wide mapping of diversion systems, professional training programmes, transnational exchanges, advocacy activities and the establishment of the Community of Practice.

Implemented through a phased roadmap extending to 2030, the plan aims to transform the European Youth Diversion Network into a permanent hub for cooperation, innovation and comparative learning. By strengthening collaboration across Europe, the network seeks to improve diversion policy and practice, contribute to more child-friendly justice systems and ensure that more children have access to constructive, rights-based and development-oriented responses when they come into conflict with the law.