

## Terms of Reference

### Expert Panel on Access to Justice

#### 1. Introduction

Validity strives for a world of equality, where emotional, mental and learning differences are valued equally; where the inherent autonomy and dignity of each person is fully respected; and where human rights are realised for all people without discrimination. One important way to achieve this is ensuring **access to justice** for all persons, regardless of participation as victim or defendant, or type of disability or vulnerability.

The Expert Panel brings internationally recognised experts in the field together to directly influence and shape promising practices related to access to justice through online meetings and discussions. In criminal justice, our aim is to ensure the rights of victims and defendants with disabilities and promote their participation and equality. Panel members will advise on and contribute to innovative intersectional research and policy recommendations at the international level, will influence policy-makers in Brussels, will support the creation of practical tools and guidance, and will help ensure maximum reach and impact of Validity and its partners' work on access to justice for persons with disabilities.

#### 2. Access to Justice projects

Validity focuses on the synergies between legal, policy and practice developments to improve the experiences and outcomes for persons with disabilities in the justice system and ensure alignment of EU policies with the UN CRPD and the UN CRC. It is currently working on five European Union co-funded projects in 9 EU countries, taking place between mid-2022 and mid-2025.

- Developing and piloting accessible digital support services for victims with disabilities in the form of a 'live' chat service operated by victim support services. (CHAT for victims – 101056702)
- Creating a benchbook for defendants with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities to ensure the proper provision of procedural accommodations in the courtroom. (ENABLE – 101056701)
- Improving the detection, reporting and responses to violence against women and children with psychosocial and/or intellectual disabilities in institutions by developing and implementing a dedicated monitoring protocol (DIS-CONNECTED – 101049690)
- Improving child protection systems for children with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities in criminal proceedings by developing integrated and responsive digital tools and practices (LINK – 101097047)

- Promoting the enforcement of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights for persons with disabilities across the EU through developing a guidebook and providing training on strategic litigation (LITI-GATE – 101084868)

This builds on the work that Validity has been doing over the past years, and in particular the [Child-Friendly Justice](#) and [Voices for Justice](#) projects.

### 3. Purpose of Expert Panel

Expert Panel members will ensure that Validity’s work on access to justice benefits from high-level, multi-disciplinary and diverse expertise, contributing towards the overall quality of reforms aiming to improve the access and participation of persons and children with disabilities in the criminal justice systems.

- Ensure the projects have EU and international relevance, and draw on and reference emerging thinking and practices around the world in terms of children’s rights, victims’ rights, disability rights, access to justice, and accessible communication;
- Identify synergies between projects and make recommendations to Validity on how to enhance and develop the projects individually and together;
- Contribute to raising awareness of the findings, recommendations and tools to policy-makers, legal experts, professionals, and practitioners;
- Promote the potential and sustainable impact of the projects’ tools and recommendations, ensuring the practical relevance of the deliverables.

### 4. Role and Responsibilities

The Expert Panel will consist of international and EU experts, national experts, self-advocates, and experts with disabilities. Its composition may vary in different meetings, depending on the availability of experts and the needs of the project. It will bring together cross-disciplinary expertise and experience to support projects, and will include experts in the following areas:

- Disability rights in the EU and the UNCRPD;
- Self-advocates and persons with disabilities, including children, with experience of the justice system as participants, activists or professionals;
- Victims’ rights and support services in the justice system in the European Union;
- Defendants’ rights and support services in the justice system in the European Union;
- Criminal procedure and criminal justice;
- Children’s rights, child-friendly justice and participation;
- Women’s rights and gender equality;
- Accessible technology and digital services;
- Clinical psychology and individual assessments in the criminal justice system.

Experts may be asked to join on a voluntary basis or with payment for their time, depending on their particular circumstances. The intention is to ensure that people with expertise and interest in this work are able to participate in the panel.

Panel members are expected to be involved in the following activities, in accordance with their availability:

- Ideally a 2-year commitment to the panel, so that there is continuity and impact across projects and on Validity’s work;
- Participate in between 2 and 4 remote meetings (1 -1 ½ hours) each year, this might be panel meetings, but may also be individual or smaller thematic meetings;
- The opportunity to provide verbal and/or written feedback to written materials, depending on interest and availability ;
- Invitations to participate in or speak at national and international conferences or webinars;
- There may be other issues that arise where Expert Panel members may be consulted on an ad hoc basis, depending on their interests and availability;
- The panel will operate in English.

Validity will provide:

- An agenda for the expert panel meeting at least one week prior to the meeting, and a short briefing note about the meeting and what the expectations are in terms of input and expertise;
- A short presentation at the start of the expert panel meeting to introduce the topics for discussion and raise relevant questions;
- Gender, disability and age-appropriate reasonable accommodations to ensure accessibility as requested by panel members prior to the meeting;
- Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses, with prior agreement and in accordance with Validity’s finance policy;
- Compensation for expert panel members with disabilities where appropriate.

## 5. Timetable

The Panel will meet remotely on a quarterly basis – meaning 4 times in a year. Each meeting will be focused on a specific theme or issue relevant to the particular phase of the projects, and Panel members are therefore requested to attend meetings related to their expertise. This means that they are not expected to attend all meetings.

Anticipated meeting schedule:

2023	2024	2025
	February	February
April	May/June	May/June
September	September	September
December	December	December

## 6. Contact

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