

## **CREAN Conference 2026 Concept Note**

# **Knowledge Circulation in Children's Rights Studies**

## **Production, Impact and Reintegration of Knowledge across Academia, Policy, Practice and Children's Lives**

3-4 December 2026

Impact Hub Genève, Rue Fendt, 1 – 1201 Genève / Switzerland

### **RATIONALE**

Over the past decade, the conferences of the Children's Rights European Academic Network (CREAN) have progressively mapped the development of children's rights as an interdisciplinary academic field and its evolving relationship with society. Through successive thematic focuses, these conferences have contributed to structuring a shared intellectual space while fostering dialogue between academia and a wide range of professional and civil actors.

Earlier conferences have engaged with three key dimensions. First, the focus on education highlighted the role of higher education institutions in teaching and advancing children's rights, as well as in shaping future professionals and scholars. Second, attention to impact examined how children's rights research informs policy development and contributes to evidence-based decision-making, emphasising the growing importance of scientific knowledge in formulating and evaluating public policies. Third, the theme of collaborative research explored the research practices, particularly through partnerships between academia, civil society, governmental actors, and international organisations, thereby highlighting the importance of co-production and interdisciplinary exchange.

Therefore the 2026 CREAN Conference proposes to engage with the circulation of knowledge across academia, policy, practice, and in the lived realities of children.

In recent years, *Children's Rights and Childhood Studies* have become more consolidated as interdisciplinary fields. This evolution has been marked by the development of increasingly sophisticated theoretical frameworks, innovative methodological approaches, and a growing recognition within academic institutions. Drawing on a wide range of disciplines, including law, sociology, education, psychology, anthropology, and political science; interdisciplinary approaches allow for a richer and more complex understanding of children's lives and rights.

However, this consolidation also raises important issues. As these fields continue to become more established in academia, research risk to become increasingly oriented toward internal academic debates, disciplinary recognition, and institutional imperatives. In this context, even when grounded in the observation and analysis of children lived realities, research may remain often confined to academic circles, without sufficiently circulating beyond academia and returning to the contexts and communities from which it originates. Expanding boundaries of academia is particularly significant in *Children's Rights and Childhood Studies*, where research is frequently based on close engagement with children's everyday lives, experiences, and environments. The production of knowledge in these fields is thus inherently linked to social realities. Yet, the pathways through which this knowledge circulates is neither straightforward nor guaranteed.

In this perspective, the notion of 'knowledge circulation' invites a shift away from linear understandings of 'knowledge transfer', often conceived as a one-directional movement from academia to policy, practice, and society. Knowledge must be understood as circulating within complex ecosystems, where it is continuously translated, negotiated and transformed by different actors.

These ecosystems reflect a transdisciplinary configuration of knowledge production, involving a plurality of stakeholders, including academic institutions, international and regional organisations, national and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, practitioners, educators, and children themselves. Within and across these spaces, knowledge is shaped by:

- differing institutional logics and priorities;
- disciplinary languages and epistemological assumptions;
- power relations and access to resources;
- and varying expectations regarding what constitutes relevant, legitimate, or actionable knowledge.

As knowledge circulates between ecosystems, it is further shaped through processes of 'translation and transformation' to new contexts. This reshaping may enhance accessibility and usability, but it can also reframe or even distort its original meaning. Understanding these dynamics is essential for assessing how knowledge does, or fail to, contribute to social change.

At the same time, the concept of knowledge circulation must be complemented by a critical reflection on the idea of 'return and reintegration'. While much attention has been given to the production and, more recently, the co-production of knowledge, less consideration has

been paid to the question of whether and how knowledge ultimately returns to the lived realities of children it seeks to understand and improve.

The notion of return raises fundamental questions about the social responsibility of research. It invites a move beyond extractive or one-directional models of knowledge production and transfer, toward more reciprocal and interactive relationships between research and social contexts. In this sense, return implies that knowledge:

- becomes accessible and meaningful to diverse audiences;
- informs practices and decision-making processes;
- contributes to the empowerment of children and communities;
- and is reappropriated, contested, or transformed within social realities.

This perspective also calls for greater attention to the position of children. Ensuring that knowledge circulate and returns to children in ways that are accessible, relevant, and respectful of their agency constitutes a key challenge for the field.

Inevitably, examining knowledge circulation and return requires engaging with the power dynamics that shape whose knowledge is produced, valued, and mobilised. Not all forms of knowledge circulate equally. Scientific knowledge may be privileged in policy arenas, while experiential, local, or child-generated knowledge may be marginalised. Similarly, the capacity to act as a knowledge mediator is unevenly distributed across actors and institutions. In this context, critical questions emerge:

- Who has the authority to define what counts as valid knowledge in children's rights?
- Which forms of knowledge are prioritised in processes of production, translation and use; and how can more inclusive and pluralistic approaches be developed?
- How can more democratic forms of knowledge circulation be assured?

Building on this conceptual grounding, the 2026 CREAN Conference seeks to supplement the focus on knowledge production with an examination of the chain of knowledge production, impact and reintegration from its emergence in research contexts, through its circulation across different arenas, to its potential reintegration and impact into children's lived realities. In doing so, the conference invites participants to reflect on the conditions under which research in *Children's Rights and Childhood Studies* can achieve meaningful societal engagement and impact, not only at the level of policy, but also in everyday practices and experiences of children. Ultimately, the 2026 CREAN Conference aims to deepen the network's engagement with the societal role of scholarship. It calls for a renewed reflection on the responsibility of interdisciplinary research: not only to observe and analyse children's lives, but also to ensure that the knowledge produced contributes, in concrete and accountable ways, to the improvement of their lived realities.

## Objectives of the conference

The 2026 CREAN Conference aims to:

- Advance theoretical and empirical understanding of knowledge circulation reintegration in *Children's Rights and Childhood Studies*;
- Provide a platform for dialogue between academics, policy-makers, practitioners and civil society actors on how knowledge is produced, translated and circulated;
- Critically reflect on the power dynamics and ethical dimensions of knowledge circulation as an integrated process of production, impact and reintegration;
- Identify innovative practices and methodologies that enhance the reach, relevance and inclusiveness of children's rights knowledge;
- Strengthen CREAN's role as a space for exchange, reflection and collaboration across disciplines and sectors.

## Audience

This conference, which is part of the activities developed by the CREAN, is open for CREAN members as well as for other interested participants. We particularly invite policy-makers, staff members of civil society organisations, international organisations and researchers who work on themes related to childhood, children's rights, human rights studies and cognate academic fields.

## Call for posters and papers

You may submit proposals for participation in one or both of the following formats:

### 1. Posters: Knowledge Circulation in Policy and Practice

The poster session is dedicated mainly to non-academic organisations and practitioners working in the field of children's rights, including NGOs, international and regional organisations, public authorities, and civil society actors. The session aims to showcase how academic knowledge on children's rights is used, translated, adapted, or circulated in policy and in practice, as well as how the knowledge produced in policy and practice contributes to broader knowledge ecosystems. We welcome contributions that reflect on how organisations engage with research, integrate academic findings into their work, or generate and share knowledge from policy and practice.

Posters may present, for example:

- knowledge produced in policy and practice;
- grass-root initiatives informed by academic research;
- tools, guidelines, or educational programmes developed through research-practice interaction;
- experiences of knowledge translation between research and field contexts;
- reflections on barriers and enablers to knowledge circulation and use.

Participants are invited to present their work through posters and supporting materials displayed in a dedicated space.

## 2. Papers: Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research in Children's Rights and Childhood Studies

We welcome paper submissions for parallel sessions dedicated to academic research in Children's Rights and Childhood Studies, with a particular focus on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. This track invites contributions that reflect on how knowledge is produced, circulated, translated, and potentially reintegrated into children's lived realities, with particular attention to transdisciplinary approaches that bridge academia, policy, and practice-based knowledge. We particularly encourage submissions of both individual and group abstracts also related to PhD research, small-scale and large projects, that critically engage with the relationship between research, policy, and practice, and that consider the societal impact of scientific knowledge.

We welcome papers related to:

- Ongoing, completed, or planned research projects engaging with how knowledge in Children's Rights and Childhood Studies is produced and used;
- Collaborative, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary research initiatives exploring processes of knowledge circulation across different contexts;
- Methodological, theoretical, or empirical reflections on how knowledge hierarchies are formed and how more inclusive and pluralistic approaches can be developed;
- Research on the societal impact of children's rights knowledge, including its circulation, appropriation, and return to practice and lived realities.

Participants are invited to present their work in parallel sessions.

## **Submission guidelines and timing**

All summaries must be submitted before 20 July 2026. Applicants will be notified of the decision by the organising Committee by 10 September 2026.

The submission form is available on [CREAN Conference 2026 - Call for posters and papers – Remplir le formulaire](#).

### 1. Posters

Please submit a 200-word summary of the poster you wish to present, along with the preferred format of your presentation (poster format, flyers, etc.).

### 2. Papers

Please submit a 300-word abstract, along with three to five keywords.

## **Contact**

For any queries or further information, please contact: [crean@unige.ch](mailto:crean@unige.ch)

For more information about CREAN: [crean-network.org](http://crean-network.org).

### **Children's Rights European Academic Network (CREAN)**

This is the bi-annual conference of the Children's Rights European Academic Network (CREAN). CREAN aims to further enhance the academic field of children's rights as an interdisciplinary field of studies. The network is composed of European higher education institutions that work together to support the development of education, research and outreach activities. Through its networking activities, CREAN acts as a platform for the promotion and exchange of information on scientific research and fosters research collaborations between its members.