

# Eurochild Conference 2016 Declaration

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“Doers should start speaking; speakers should start doing!”

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This declaration has been drafted by a team of young people in collaboration with staff of the Eurochild secretariat, with input from participants of the Eurochild conference 2016 ‘Children’s Rights Matter: Why Europe Needs to Invest in Children’. The conference was co-hosted by Office de la Naissance et de l’Enfance and Kind en Gezin.



**Eurochild**  
Putting children at  
the heart of Europe

# 1. Why are we worried?

- Over one in four children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe.

Children in poverty face additional barriers to enjoying their rights, such as access to education and health services, unemployment of parents, social exclusion - especially Roma children and migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children. Many children experiencing poverty lack the basic things in life - enough food and somewhere warm and safe to live. In modern consumerist societies, children are being discriminated against among peers when they do not have access to modern technology.

- In 2015, over 1 million people travelled to Europe as refugees, fleeing conflict in their home countries. This included 363,890 children, 90,000 of whom had been separated from their parents. Examples of the issues that refugee children face are a lack of home safety, clean clothes and books. The right to play is taken away from them, they are unfamiliar with the language and culture. They are living in unsafe conditions without families which can have an effect on their emotional well-being and they take on adult responsibilities. They face situations no child in Europe should be facing with our economic resources.

- In Europe, there are approximately 1 million children growing up in care, with an overrepresentation of Roma children and children with disabilities. Children often end up in institutional care for the wrong reasons, such as poverty and discrimination. Children in institutional care continue to face issues such as separation from their families, low self-esteem, fear of being placed in an unsuitable family where they don't feel like they belong, lack of support and care. They are often being discriminated against by their peers. They are often faced with inadequate legal regulations and the slowness of bureaucracy.

# 2. What are some of the promises that have already been made?

- [The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\).](#) (1989) A list of rights for all children for which governments have a duty to take forward.

- [The European Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children.](#) (2013) A set of guidelines on how EU Member States should organise and implement policies to combat child poverty and promote children's rights and well-being.

- [The Written Declaration on Investing in Children.](#) (2015) The most signed Declaration in the European Parliament since 2011! It includes key requests for European institutions calling for them to implement the Recommendation on Investing in Children (above).

- [The UNCRC General Comment 19 \(draft\) on Public Spending.](#) (2016) A set of guidelines for how governments can spend money to further respect, promote, protect and fulfil the rights of

- [The Sustainable Development Goals.](#) (2015) These are 17 Global Goals that cover a number of important issues for the world, including ending extreme poverty and ensuring all children receive a good education.

- [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.](#) (2009) This brings together certain political, social and economic rights for European Union citizens and residents into EU law. Article 24 promotes the right of the child.

We acknowledge the willingness and commitments made by decision-makers in developing these policies. And, we note that there is some good practice. **But, we are not satisfied.**

### 3. What is our vision?

- Where children's rights are not just a list on paper but are a reality for every child, everywhere, and all of the time. It should not be taken for granted that having laws that cover those issues means the issues are solved. On the contrary it should give us the courage for digging deeper into the law and the reality, in order to make the gap between these two as small as possible. We are sure most of us know how a child should be treated and taken care of in our Europe, but striving for a reality of our ideal situation is the challenge.
- Strong and hopeful societies where children and adults are valued and respected equally.
- We want adults to care about our future: How will they leave the world for future generations? We want to grow up in a world with clean air and water, quality education and health available to everyone, where families live in peace in sustainable 'child friendly cities' and parents have decent work. We want a world where responsible consumption and production is encouraged.
- For a Europe in which children's rights are central to all decisions about new law and policies.
- Investing time, money and knowledge in children and young people's experiences, as well as creating opportunities for inclusive and varied ways for them to participate in decision-making processes related to their lives in Europe.
- Acknowledging children and young people as genuine partners in making decisions because children and young people often know best. This means opportunities for children and young people to see the difference their ideas are making, which would help to build greater trust with adults.
- For a Europe where decision-makers not only say but act towards their said visions, and give children and young people a follow-up. This is in order to create an interplay and hope in the child or young person's heart and not only "words said".
- For a Europe in which adults who make decisions do not forget what it is like to be a child, and try as hard as possible to make growing up the happiest period of people's lives.
- Where children and young people have access to information on how money is allocated and spent to support the well-being of children. This should be explained in a way that is understandable to all.
- A Europe where every child knows exactly where to go to in order to get help in any matter, such as sexual health clinics or helplines. Where children have experiences so that they can learn how to keep themselves safe and to develop the competencies that they need to become effective citizens in a digital world.

## 4. What needs to happen ?

In taking forward the following actions, as with any policy, full account should be taken of the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Child participation

- Members of the European Parliament should more actively include children and young people in the decision-making process so that children can freely and openly voice their opinions and suggest ideas. This also applies to governments in countries that wish to become members of the EU.
- National governments should review the balance of participation and protection in their domestic legislation affecting children and young people in care, so that children and young people can have greater independence in decision-making in their own lives, including with regard to the use of social media.
- Young people should be involved in expert meetings as they are experts by experience and should be given the opportunity to co-lead projects, also working together with those least likely to have their voices heard.

### Child budgeting

- The European Commission should call on Member States to monitor how much money they are spending on children (directly and indirectly) and to report on, evaluate and audit their budgets. Governments at all levels across Europe must ensure that the allocated budget for children and young people is increased and spent effectively.
- The European Commission should ensure that children and young people are provided with ways to actively monitor and meaningfully participate and interact in budget processes at the local, regional, national and EU level. Information about budgets and explanations on how money is spent should be easily accessible and understandable.

### Training and awareness-raising

- Involve children and young people in delivering training to professionals and other children, so that they tell children about their rights. This will empower adults and children to act against discrimination and be world citizens. This is especially important for children living in poverty, children in care, children affected by migration and those in other vulnerable situations. A Children's Rights passport for every child should be produced in each country to give a more specific and easy formulated guide to laws, rights and policies.
- Schools and local services should work to prevent stigmatisation of children, young people and families living in poverty. Talk to children living in poverty as equals. Poverty-proof schools.

## **Children affected by migration**

- Governments of all levels and civil society must encourage the spread of good practice across Member States. Countries where all refugees are welcomed should be the model for ending inequalities within Europe.
- There should be supportive adults for all refugee children and young people and families should be enabled to stay together. Refugees' inclusion in all aspects of social and community life should be promoted and enabled through provision of adequate funding.
- The European Council should work with countries experiencing conflict to enable and support solutions so that home countries become safe places to stay.