Eurochild, UNESCO Chairs Global Network, Council of Europe and UNICEF Office of Research Innocenti take the opportunity of this first edition of the Galway School ‘Child Rights in Practice and Research’ to focus on family and parenting support in the context of realising children’s rights.

This school has four overarching objectives:

- Gain knowledge and understanding on how family support impacts on the realisation of children’s rights in practice, underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Council of Europe Recommendation on Policy to Support Positive Parenting.

- Build the capacity of delegates to focus on how to (a) build the evidence (b) present the evidence and (c) engage with and influence policy makers.

- Share ‘inspiring practices’ from across Europe in integrated family support services.

- Strengthen collaboration and exchange among practitioners and researchers in children’s rights across Europe.
Background to organising partners

**Eurochild**

*Eurochild* is a network of over 170 organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to promote the rights and well-being of children and young people. Eurochild is one of the largest advocacy organisations on children’s issues at EU level whose work is underpinned by the UNCRC.

We focus particularly on those children at risk of poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation. Our members are working directly with children and families or are campaigning on their behalf. Eurochild’s thematic working groups provide a forum for members to exchange knowledge and practice in specific areas, including family and parenting support, early years’ education and care and children in alternative care.

As Eurochild we are pushing for effective implementation of the 2013 European Commission Recommendation on “Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage” and we believe that working with families is at the very core of it. A *handbook* was recently published by the EU Alliance for Investing in Children coordinated by Eurochild. Back in 2012 we published a *compendium of inspiring practices* on early intervention and prevention in family and parenting support. Earlier this year a *policy position* on evidence and evaluation methodologies for family and parenting support policies and practice was developed. In this policy position Eurochild advocates for a pluralist approach to evidence, for a shift from evidence-based practice to practice-based evidence, from what works to how it works and why, for whom, and in what contexts. UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre steered Eurochild’s thinking and reflection on these issues. 2014 Eurochild conference report “Children First - Better Public Spending for Better Outcomes for Children and Families” highlights the need for authorities to invest more and better in children; the importance of preventive services; the value of participation of children and young people; and the benefits of monitoring and evaluating budgets spent on children.

**UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre**

The *UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre* (UCFRC) at the School of Political Science and Sociology is part of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS) at the National University of Ireland. Founded in 2007 with support from The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Health Service Executive, the mission of the UNESCO Centre is to help create the conditions for excellent policies, services and practices that improve the lives of children, youth and families through research, education and service development. The UCFRC undertakes an extensive programme of activities nationally and at a global level with core expertise in the areas of Family Support and Youth Development. Research undertaken is strongly connected to applied work for children and families and is relevant to a diverse range of stakeholders including service users, policymakers, politicians, service managers and front-line staff.

Professor Pat Dolan, joint founder and Director of the UCFRC, holds the prestigious *UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement*, the first to be awarded in the Republic of Ireland. The UNESCO Chair delivers a comprehensive programme of work towards the objective
of promoting civic engagement and leadership skills among children and youth. The programme is built around core strands of research, teaching, policy and good practice and is underpinned by a range of national and international collaborations.

**Council of Europe**
The Council of Europe is the continent’s leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

The Council of Europe’s transversal programme “**Building a Europe for and with children**” is a catalyst for the implementation of the UNCRC in Europe. The Programme provides policy guidance and support to the member states in implementing the UNCRC and Council of Europe standards and promote a holistic and an integrated approach to children’s rights. The Council of Europe works to promote combat all forms of violence against children, focussing specifically on sexual violence and corporal punishment of children. Furthermore, it promotes child-friendly justice, social and health care services, child participation, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education.

Based on a Recommendation on **policy to support positive parenting** adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2009, the Council of Europe promotes parenting based on respect for children’s rights and a non-violent family environment where parents do not use corporal or psychologically demeaning punishment.

**Unicef Office of Research - Innocenti**
The UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti works to improve international understanding of issues relating to children’s rights and to help facilitate full implementation of the UNCRC in developing, middle-income and industrialized countries. The UNICEF Office of Research has set out to develop a research agenda on family support and parenting support globally. The main goal is to build the evidence base on what kind of family and parenting support works under what conditions and for whom in order to promote child well-being in different national contexts. At the Office of Research we are convinced that newly emerging global body of evidence will contribute to stronger policy, more efficient interventions and increased cross-country learning.

A research compendium on “**Family and Parenting Support – Policy and Provision in a Global Context**” - that encompasses a conceptual framework, an analytical paper and national case studies - was recently produced. An integrated and life-course approach to children is taken, which considers their situation and a range of outcomes for them at different stages of their growth and development. Innocenti is currently engaged in generating robust evidence of impact of parenting programmes in South Africa and the Philippines to inform programmes in middle and lower income countries.
School core themes

(1) **Public investment** – How to make the economic case for child-centred family and parenting support?

(2) **Integrated practice** – How to get the best outcomes for children through integrating transfers and services in family and parenting support?

(3) **Evaluation methods** – How to implement a pluralistic and rights-based approach in evaluating family and parenting support and make use of evaluations for advocacy purposes?

(4) **Best interest of the child** – How to ensure respect for children’s rights in family and parenting interventions targeted at children and families at risk?

For each of the core 4 themes, 2 expert speakers will be invited to contribute (working papers to be prepared in advance). Experts will give inspiration on working with the most disadvantaged families and children from a ‘real-life’ practice experience or will present work that has been informed by children and young people. They will address links to the UNCRC and reflect on the relationship between research, practice, and relevance/use of evidence for policy making. A peer-led discussion to critique and respond to the expert contribution will follow. A compilation of contributions will be published in a book in April 2016.

Delegates

This **closed expert meeting** will bring together up to 50 ‘policy-literate’ **practitioners and researchers** from across Europe (all Council of Europe member states).

**Condition for participation:** relevant practice/research background, possibility to apply learning gained, solid understanding of English, commitment to attend the whole event. Participants are expected to arrive in Galway on 1st December evening and leave on 4th December afternoon. The organising committee will select delegates on the basis of demonstrated interest, motivation, profile and provenance.

Expenses

- Bursaries for travel/accommodation of participants will be offered.
- There is no registration fee but delegates are expected to make a written contribution before and after the event and participate actively.

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