

Eurochild's Strategic Plan 2019-2021

This is a draft plan for Eurochild's Strategy for consultation with members of Eurochild. Please share it with relevant colleagues in your member organisation. Please do not circulate outside of the membership. Comments invited online latest by 19 January 2018.

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Summary

Eurochild advocates for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policy making.

We are a network of organisations and individuals working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work.

This Strategic Plan is the result of a process of reflection with Eurochild members, management board, and children and young people. It reaffirms Eurochild's vision, mission, and theory of change, and sets out its strategic goals for 2019-2021, in a clear framework for Eurochild members, partners, funders and other supporters.

As a European network with a Brussels-based secretariat, we provide an essential bridge between the EU and national level. We influence EU policy and funding, and support our members leverage EU economic and political power to bring about positive change in children's lives.

The next 3-year strategic plan falls at a time of considerable uncertainty. European Parliament elections take place in May 2019. Brexit negotiations officially end on 27 March 2019. After years of austerity policies, economic recovery is slow and inequalities across Europe seem to be worsening. Coupled with growing security threats, fears around migration and geo-political instability at global level, the context for progressing a children's rights agenda looks challenging. At the same time uncertainty also creates opportunities to put forward new ideas and to challenge traditional ways of working. Innovative and successful practice – in particular harnessing the creative energy of children and young people - are abundant at local level. More emphasis is being given to breaking down silos and working collaboratively. There is more understanding and expertise on participatory practice than ever before, and recognition of children and young people themselves as positive agents of change.

Eurochild's unique strength is the wide expertise and commitment of its members. In the next strategic plan, Eurochild will place particular emphasis on engaging with, and giving responsibility to, members to help deliver our goals. **Child and youth participation will also be a central tenet of our work. We will build on our existing child participation strategy, which aims to give children a voice in Eurochild and build a community of young child rights advocates.**

I. Preparing the strategic plan

1. The strategy builds on the achievements and lessons from Eurochild's strategic plan 2014-2018. It takes account of the outcomes of external evaluations carried out annually and a process of organisational strengthening that has been supported by the OAK Foundation in 2016 and 2017.
2. Members have contributed to the plan in the following ways. At the Eurochild Members' Day on 6 April 2017 members participated in a facilitated process to agree the practical vision, current reality and strategic directions. A members' survey gathered information on members own priorities and their vision for Eurochild between mid-May and end-June 2017. Eurochild management board and secretariat staff had a strategic planning meeting on 27-28 June to build on member inputs and decide next steps. Members are consulted on the first draft of the plan November-December and will have the opportunity for final comments in March. The plan will be adopted at the General Assembly on 18 April 2018.
3. Children and young people have contributed to the plan in the following ways. The Child Participation Advisory Group, comprised of children, young people and adults met on 18-19 November 2016 in Brussels. They discussed the three areas of Eurochild's work that would need to be included in the child participation strategy, including the strategic planning process. The same group participated in the 2017 Members' Day and provided input to the strategic planning sessions. Children and young people will be consulted on the draft strategy, in parallel to the consultations with members and externals. This will happen through the 3 pilot National Eurochild Forums (in Bulgaria, Estonia and Malta) and the Eurochild Children's Council, as well as through a child-friendly consultation with a broader group of children and young people through our members.
4. External partners including peer organisations, EU officials, media contacts and foundations have contributed to the plan through informal consultations. We gathered feedback on (1) the main contribution they think Eurochild has made (2) our strengths & weaknesses (3) recommendations for the future.

II. Introducing Eurochild

5. Eurochild is a network of 165 organisations and individuals from 33 European countries working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. Our work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the most signed international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people a comprehensive set of rights.

Vision and mission

6. **Our vision** is a society where children and young people grow up happy, healthy and confident and respected as individuals in their own right.
7. **Our mission** is to promote the rights and well-being of children in policy and practice through advocacy, membership exchange and research.

Our core values

8. **Rights-based.** Members have a shared commitment to the full realisation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as its associated Optional Protocols, General Comments and guidance, especially the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care for Children. A rights-based approach recognises the indivisibility and inter-connectedness of children’s rights. It also requires that all rights are underpinned by 4 key principles: non-discrimination; the best interest of the child; right to life, survival and resources; and the right of the child to be heard in decisions affecting them.
9. **Membership-driven.** Through good governance and use of various membership engagement tools we ensure our work is informed by members’ needs and interests, and helps them achieve their organisational goals. To maximise our impact, we will strengthen members’ ownership of our advocacy work and coordinate how we influence at EU and national levels. We also facilitate membership collaboration and networking so members can learn from each other and share practice.
10. **Learning organisation.** We value constructive feedback and aim to adapt to changing environments, be it in policy, research arena or broader political or civil society sector. We are committed to remain sensitive and vigilant of children’s ever changing realities and to respond to new challenges in the most meaningful way possible. To that end, we provide regular opportunities to reflect on and improve our ways of working in the Secretariat, governance structures and within the wider membership. We have a monitoring and evaluation framework which sets out our goals and expected outcomes. Progress is regularly measured against agreed indicators. Where possible we will involve members in designing this framework and collecting relevant data to measure impact. We will seek to ensure ongoing investment in external evaluation and capacity building to ensure we improve how we work and strengthen our impact.
11. **Partnership.** We aim to collaborate with other organisations and networks who are working towards the same goals and operating with similar values. We seek to harness synergies by establishing partnership and alliances where appropriate. We will be open and transparent about our areas of interest and expertise, seeking to play to our strengths and to those of our partners. We will participate in umbrella structures and alliances where it clearly brings added-value to the work of Eurochild and when we have capacity to contribute knowledge and expertise. We will regularly evaluate the partnerships we have entered.
12. **Empowering organisation.** As a membership network we want to ensure members have equal access to information and opportunities to participate in the network. Where possible, and within the capacity of the organisation, we will produce tools and products that are accessible and recognise the needs of all people. We will seek more and better ways through which members can engage in the network and give members leading roles in the implementation of Eurochild’s activities. Through our child participation strategy, we will ensure the voices of children and young people are also heard and that we build their capacity to engage meaningfully in our advocacy work and embed children’s participation in Eurochild’s work and within our governance structures.

Our way of working

13. Eurochild aims to bring about positive changes in the lives of children, particularly those affected by poverty and discrimination, those at risk of entering, or already in, the care system and other groups of children in vulnerable situations, including migrant and refugee children. We are learning from years of reflection on how to improve members’ engagement – including members advocating for children’s rights nationally or those working on the ground with the most disadvantaged children and families. We have also reformed our approach to working directly with children and young people. We aim to ensure our advocacy is informed by experiences from our members and children and young people; and we aim to enable them to influence our work.

14. With this Strategic Plan 2019-2021 Eurochild aims to ensure it remains a dynamic organisation, with the capacity to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges, while using its resources in the most effective and strategic way to promote children's rights.
15. Whilst we deem the vision and mission of Eurochild to remain valid, the approach of a theory of change to describe the work of the network has been newly introduced in 2017. Our **theory of change** shows how we envision our role in reaching a society where children and young people grow up happy, healthy and confident and respected as individuals in their own right. To clarify the choice of strategic goals we have identified a two pronged approach to achieving our vision:
 - Firstly, we are harnessing the potential of the European Union to create a large-scale impact in the lives of children. Through improved social and economic policies and greater engagement of decision-makers, we can create long-term, sustainable improvements in the lives of children.
 - Secondly, the true power of a movement lies in its active membership. We recognise that supporting and empowering our members and children and young people themselves will bring forth a stronger movement that can allow us to leap forward collectively.

III. Opportunities and Challenges

16. The European Union exerts significant political and economic influence over Member States and the wider Europe. Therefore, Eurochild aims to influence relevant EU legislative, political and funding processes, whilst also supporting its membership to use EU legislation, policies and funding where this can help advance children's rights nationally.
17. Whilst Eurochild has a strong focus on the European Union, the network sees important opportunities for synergies with other intergovernmental bodies which can help advance the realisation of children's rights in Europe. For example, where possible we will strengthen our work and implementation of the Council of Europe's Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021). We will also draw inspiration from the work of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and use relevant General Comments in shaping how we influence policies at EU and national level. In this regard we will work in close collaboration with the global child rights network Child Rights Connect, exploring if and how Eurochild can play a role as 'regional hub'. We aim to increase synergies between the work of the European Union and these human rights institutions. In this sense we will seek to work closely with the EU Agency on Fundamental Rights.

External EU context

18. Following adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the EU has an opportunity to align its post-2020 vision with these far-reaching, integrated and visionary global commitments. Countries within and beyond the European Union have obligations to deliver on the SDGs as members of the United Nations. It does however require that targets and indicators are made relevant to an EU context.
19. The European Pillar of Social Rights may offer an opportunity to rebalance social and economic objectives of the EU. To date the EU's macro-economic policies and surveillance tools have focused on fiscal discipline and economic stability. They have endorsed, if not encouraged, cuts in public spending on social protection, health and education across Member States, in contradiction to the Social Investment Package and Recommendation on Investing in Children which were adopted by the European Commission in 2013. The Pillar introduces a new social scoreboard to monitor national performance on social and employment policy which may help give greater visibility to social outcomes, including efforts to reduce child poverty, in the EU's economic policy coordination efforts.

20. With Brexit negotiations on-going it is difficult to predict the impact on children and young people. Eurochild is supporting efforts of its UK and Irish members to insist that exit from the European Union will not roll-back commitments to children's rights. Several UK members were among the founders of Eurochild. We will seek ways to ensure that their voices are heard within the network and that they continue to benefit equally from our activities.
21. European Parliament elections for the EU-27 take place in May 2019. We will build on our experience of the 2014 election campaign when candidate MEPs were asked to sign up to become child rights champions. The child rights manifesto which Eurochild helped to create became the reference document for the newly created Intergroup on Children's Rights. We will be working with children and young people to get more candidate MEPs to speak directly and listen to children ahead of the European Parliament elections. We want to make sure the European Parliament remains a powerful voice for children's rights, either by strengthening the Intergroup or securing a dedicated Committee.
22. The next multi-annual financial framework for the European Union will be adopted by 2020. Following Brexit the available budget will be significantly lower, forcing a rethink of EU spending. This offers both a challenge and an opportunity if we can harness the EU's emphasis on so-called 'smart' spending and emphasise the long-term benefits, with concrete evidence on the benefit, of prioritising investment in children.

Internal context

23. Eurochild currently gathers 165 members in 33 countries (EU 28 + FYR of Macedonia, Ukraine, Serbia, Switzerland and Kosovo). This includes 123 full members, 39 associate members and 3 honorary members. Full members include organisations, statutory bodies and academic and research institutions with more than 2 years of legal existence. Associate members include individuals, government departments, informal organisations and organisations with less than 2 years of legal existence. Honorary members are individuals invited by the Management Board to honour their contribution to furthering children's rights in Europe.
24. The 2012 General Assembly adopted a membership typology differentiating the types of member organisations. These include: national partner networks; international organisations; national organisations; academic and research institutions; public and statutory bodies; child and youth-led organisations, and individuals. National partner networks are the 'go to' membership-based network in a country or region working on a broad range of issues concerning children's rights and well-being. They are appointed by the General Assembly following a self-assessment and review. Since 2013 Eurochild has endorsed 21 National Partner Networks in 17 countries and has observer NPNs in 6 countries.
25. Since November 2015 Eurochild has been engaged in an organisational strengthening process supported by the OAK Foundation. In October 2016, Eurochild secretariat and management board adopted an organisational development roadmap which outlines planned activities, outputs and responsibilities across 7 key areas: strategy, monitoring & evaluation; HR & work planning; leadership & governance; internal communications & culture; operations & infrastructure; membership & members' engagement; fundraising & external communications. This roadmap will be renewed and updated in 2018.
26. Eurochild's management board comprises 7 democratically-elected representatives of member organisations, from different countries. At least 3 of the 7 members come from Eurochild's national partner networks. Members have a mandate of 3-years, renewable once. Implementation of Eurochild's activities as agreed in the strategic plan is delegated to the Secretariat, under the supervision of the Secretary General. The Secretariat currently comprises 13 salaried staff members (7 full-time and 6 part-time).
27. Since 2005, Eurochild receives an operating grant from the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs in the policy field of poverty reduction and social inclusion. It is subject to annual renewal based on approval of the submitted work programme. Eurochild is currently seeking a new framework

partnership agreement for the period 2018-2021. European Commission funding makes up approximately 75% of Eurochild's annual income. A fundraising strategy is in place to reduce that to 40% by 2020.

IV. What is the change Eurochild wants to see?

28. Eurochild is concerned first and foremost by levels of poverty and inequality in Europe; how this impacts children's lives and prevents the realisation of their rights. Eurochild understands child poverty in its broadest sense. Therefore, child poverty and social exclusion is not solely about family income but it is about growing up in a nurturing environment where the child and the family can access the necessary services and support. To break the cycle of poverty, it is critical that children are recognised as rights-holders themselves rather than solely as family dependents. Europe's future depends on its citizens being more autonomous and resilient to change, and respectful towards difference. But this will only happen if adults support children's sense of identity and self-worth.

29. Whilst the situation varies enormously across Europe, child poverty and social exclusion exists in every country. Furthermore, our societies are increasingly diverse, and the rising number of children arriving in Europe as refugees and migrants need services to protect them and support their integration in society. Our child protection systems must be ready to address the specific needs of such children in a way that they can integrate into our societies. Detention of children should be a thing of the past.

30.

Children's rights are rarely high up on the political agenda, which means that children's needs are not looked at from a holistic perspective. Child well-being is generally seen as secondary outcome of policies organised in silos of social welfare, employment, economic, education or health policies. The work of Eurochild, its members and its allies aims to challenge this paradigm. We believe that to build inclusive, safe and prosperous societies we need to strengthen families and communities where respect for the rights of the child is at the centre. This is why we will continue to work on prioritising investment in children and families, on promoting child protection reforms, by listening directly to children and young people. Always departing from a children's rights perspective, more than ever our work needs to be driven by, and have an impact on children, whose voices are not otherwise heard.

In the period 2019-21 our advocacy will focus on tackling child poverty and social exclusion (promoting a children's rights approach), reforming child welfare and protection systems (promoting systemic change centred on strengthening families and communities), and making children's rights visible at the highest political level. Through demonstration of good practices and policies gathered from the membership, we aim to show how an integrated approach works in practice. We expect our efforts to contribute to a new generation of political leaders, policy-makers, practitioners and academics who understand and advocate for a children's rights approach to tackling child poverty and social exclusion and reforming child welfare and protection systems.

Eurochild's impact in the period 2019-2021

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: EU & national governments adopt policies that help to reduce child poverty & social exclusion

31. Children are at higher risk of poverty than the average population, with 26.4% of children living in poverty or social exclusion in the EU Member States compared to 23.5% among the total population. In its 2020 Strategy the EU set a target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty. In fact, there are more people in poverty today than before the economic crisis of 2009. Welfare systems are failing to adequately address child poverty and social exclusion. Social transfers result in less than 33% decrease in the risk of poverty rate

(an all-time low result in the EU). Some progress is being made to increase provision of early childhood education and care (although with insufficient attention to quality and integration with other family supports). However across several countries there is a worrying trend towards decreased investment in education and health promotion.

32. There are existing political commitments, such as the *Recommendation on Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage* (2013), aimed at addressing child poverty and social exclusion, which serve as advocacy tools for Eurochild. In the international arena the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Council of Europe are stepping up their work on children in vulnerable situations and on child budgeting for the realisation of children's rights. Yet, few Member States have delivered on policy reform and increased public investment aimed at preventing and tackling child poverty and social exclusion. The EU has repeatedly failed to call governments to account on how they are implementing the Recommendation on Investing in Children.
33. Using the UNCRC as our starting point, in particular article 2 on non-discrimination, Eurochild will continue to advocate for a multidimensional approach to preventing and tackling child poverty and social exclusion, and promote children's well-being. There is ample expertise within the Eurochild network, both in terms of evidence and advocacy messages which we aim to learn from and take forward. There is a need to reiterate our advocacy for comprehensive national strategies for preventing and tackling child poverty and social exclusion, supported by appropriate allocations from public budgets. As a follow-up to the various pieces of work Eurochild has done child-friendly budgeting, we will support member organisations to be advocates for the UNCRC General Comment 19 on Public Budgeting for the Realization of Children's Rights. Eurochild is keen to take forward its work on Childonomics measuring the long-term social and economic return of investing in children, beyond 2018; and use the findings in its advocacy as well as expand the geographic scope of testing the model.
34. Recognising the critical importance of early years in public policy efforts to reduce child poverty and social exclusion, Eurochild will build on work carried out by its thematic working group on early years' education and care. We will continue to advocate for early childhood development to be a public policy priority, for holistic and integrated policies and practices, for increased investment in family and parenting support, and for the development of a competent early childhood workforce and governance system. We will further the key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care drawn up in 2014 under the auspices of the European Commission (DG Education and Culture).
35. The targets of this strategic goal are decision-makers at European and national level who have the responsibility for the design, implementation and financial support for policies aimed at preventing and tackling child poverty and social exclusion. We will build the capacity of members to better harness the positive influence of the EU, for example through the European Semester process or its successor after 2020. We will work with allies at EU level, in particular through the Alliance for Investing in Children, the European Semester Alliance, and at global level we will contribute to the Global Coalition for Ending Child Poverty and the Working Group Investment in Children of Child Rights Connect.

36. We will work towards this by:

- a) Mobilising and working with Eurochild members and children and young people; sharing expertise and working on common messages
- b) Monitoring and influencing the EU-led processes and tools including the European Semester process and successor for the Europe 2020 strategy for policy coordination; the Pillar of Social Rights; negotiations and the use of EU funds with the aim to secure sufficient funding for tackling child poverty in Europe
- c) Linking to budgetary processes and promoting better use of public resources
- d) Choosing and working with strategic partners and pursuing alliances

37. We will know we are making progress on this strategic goal when we see:

- a) EU-level targets and implementation plans to tackle child poverty in Europe are in place
- b) More public funding is available and is better used for tackling and preventing child poverty and social exclusion
- c) Social outcomes, including efforts to reduce child poverty and social exclusion, become central in economic policy
- d) Eurochild policy positions and recommendations are used to inform policy development at EU and national level
- e) Eurochild members are consulted on policies and budgets in their countries

STRATEGIC GOAL 2. Governments reform child welfare and protection systems in line with UN Guidelines on Alternative Care

38. Over one million children are growing up in out-of-home care across Europe. Almost all children in care have one or both living parents, and separation can usually be avoided by tackling the root causes of poverty and providing high quality, accessible support services to families. Whilst there are few longitudinal studies documenting outcomes for children growing up in out-of-home care, there is evidence that among the adult population of homeless, those in the criminal justice system, or those suffering from mental health and addiction problems, there is an over-representation of those with childhood experiences in public care. ‘Institutional care’ is acknowledged as being particularly damaging because children are unable to build secure long-term attachments with caring adults, negatively impacting their physical, cognitive and emotional development. Whilst difficult to obtain accurate data, an estimated 500,000 children currently live in institutions in Europe. Across Europe there is an urgent need to improve provision of quality alternative care for those children for whom it is their best interest to be separated from their families of origin, in compliance with the ‘suitability’ principle of the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care.
39. In accordance with the ‘necessity’ principle of the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care, it is also important to increase investment in high-quality community-based family support that can prevent separation of children from their biological families. Our advocacy in this area complements our efforts to strengthen policies that address child poverty, since poverty is often a driver of separation. It is important to emphasise that whilst poverty is in no way a predictor of violence or abuse in families, it is an additional stress factor. Sometimes parents coping strategies may include addictions or substance abuse. Indeed parents own childhood experience of violence or neglect can itself be a root cause of poverty in adulthood. Eurochild’s policy recommendations will build on the extensive work of its thematic working group on family and parenting support which brings together members’ experience of practice as well as relevant academic partners.
40. Eurochild recognises that reforms of child welfare and protection systems are determined nationally or sub-nationally, therefore our efforts must be directed at building members’ capacity to advocate and supporting peer learning. We can also help members leverage EU policy and funding instruments by building awareness of influencing opportunities and monitoring mechanisms. Eurochild has partnered in the campaign Opening Doors for Europe’s children since 2013, involving 12 countries in the first phase and 16 countries in the second. Eurochild envisages developing the third phase of the campaign (2019-2021) based on lessons learnt, the level of members’ interest and our ability to raise the necessary resources. Eurochild will continue to support a thematic interest group on children in alternative care to facilitate exchange and learning among members.
41. Under this strategic goal we will invest considerable effort to inform and influence EU decision-makers, since the EU funding programmes play an important strategic role in catalysing national child welfare and protection reforms. We will build the capacity of national members’ to better harness EU influence and

funding streams. We will work with allies at EU level – in particular members of the European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community-based care.

42. We will work towards this by:

- a) Support members to advocate for national (and sub-national) reforms by building advocacy capacity and facilitating peer exchange.
- b) Engage in targeted advocacy towards the EU institutions which can help apply pressure to Member States, accession and neighbouring countries.
- c) Harness the knowledge and expertise of members and partners in the development of policy positions
- d) Working with stakeholders within and beyond civil society, e.g. academia

43. We will know we are making progress on this strategic goal when we see:

- a) Child protection reforms are a topic of EU political debates/mutual learning
- b) The EU gives recommendations to countries to reform their child protection systems
- c) There is possibility to use the multi-annual financial framework post 2020 for deinstitutionalisation reforms
- d) National reforms are carried out in consultation with Eurochild members

STRATEGIC GOAL 3. Children’s rights are more visible in EU policy & legislative initiatives

44. Despite not having a current EU Agenda on the Rights of the Child in place (expired in 2014) there is a growing awareness about children’s rights in some policy areas such as migration policies, digital/online safety, or legal proceedings. However, the lack of a framework underpinning a child rights approach to all initiatives means there is still not enough awareness of a child rights approach in all policy fields to ensure a daily practice of its implementation. Eurochild will continue to call for a comprehensive framework for EU legislation, policy and programmes to promote and protect children’s rights and well-being in Europe.

45. All EU Member States have ratified the UNCRC. The EU cannot be party to the Convention and as such the CRC provisions do not appear in EU legislation and guidance. However Article 3 of the EU Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights do provide a strong legal basis for EU responsibility to protect and promote children’s rights. Furthermore the Sustainable Development Goals are expected to have more visibility in EU policy making as it develops its 2030 agenda. The SDGs offer an opportunity to link the global and EU agenda, covering a large span of policy areas from a child rights perspective.

The start of a new EU legislature is always an opportunity to shape the EU political agenda. The European Parliament Intergroup on Children’s Rights (established after the 2014 elections) is a useful vehicle for working with a group of committed Members of European Parliament from different political parties and committees. We will support the re-establishment of the Intergroup in 2019, also pushing for a European Parliament committee with explicit responsibility for the rights of the child and legislative responsibilities. The European Commission in the next legislature (also starting 2019) might have a different structure, with new Commissioners taking office. We cannot take institutional knowledge for granted. Our task will be to raise their awareness about children’s rights and Eurochild’s work, monitor upcoming legislation and advocate for a rights based approach in their policy initiatives. Eurochild will also engage with other relevant EU institutions such as the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions to raise their awareness of children’s rights.

46. The primary targets of our advocacy are the EU institutions, in particular the European Commission, the European Parliament and Council of Member States. We will seek to support the designated coordinator for children’s rights in the European Commission and the children’s rights unit of the Fundamental Rights Agency. We will work in collaboration with other international children’s rights agencies and networks through the informal ‘Child Rights Action Group’, as well as with the EU office of UNICEF. We will build on

and learn from the efforts of national children's rights networks (our national partner networks) to give political visibility to children's rights nationally and will seek ways to involve them in EU-level advocacy. We will strengthen collaboration with the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children.

47. We will work towards this by:

- a) Seeking to influence the appointments and hearings of European Commissioner candidates
- b) Working with the new European Commission and European Parliament to put children's rights high on all EU policies' agenda
- c) Learning from and building the capacity of members to influence at EU level
- d) Working with allies and partners e.g. the Children's Rights Action Group, the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children

48. We will know we are making progress on this strategic goal when we see:

- a) The targets of our advocacy proactively reaching out to Eurochild for input
- b) A comprehensive EU Agenda or Strategy on the rights of the child
- c) A European Parliament committee with explicit responsibility for children's rights

V. How will Eurochild contribute to making that change happen?

49. Eurochild has a committed membership with wide expertise and experience. We place particular emphasis on engaging with, and giving responsibility to, members to help deliver our goals. Child and youth participation is also essential part of our work. Where possible, and where it brings added-value, we collaborate with other organisations and networks working towards the same goals and operating with similar values.

Involving members in advocacy

50. Advocacy is essential if we are to influence political, legislative and funding decisions at all levels of government to ensure an enabling environment for the realisation of children's rights. Whilst the Eurochild secretariat has a small dedicated policy and advocacy team which monitors and influences EU policies and processes, our effectiveness depends on the extent to which our members take ownership and engage with our advocacy goals and activities. This includes both participating in our advocacy towards EU institutions, and using the outcomes of our EU advocacy to influence national policies, legislation and budget decisions.

51. Engaging in sustained advocacy work requires certain levels of capacity and expertise. This is why Eurochild will reach out and support capacity of members who are positioned nationally to convene stakeholders around the strategic advocacy goals of Eurochild. We propose to focus in particular on building the capacity of national partner networks – the 'go-to' national membership organisation which convenes children's rights organisations in a national (or sub-national) setting. Our work will facilitate exchange and learning among the networks on national child rights advocacy and build capacity on opportunities and benefits of EU influencing. In countries where Eurochild has no national partner network, we will reach out to individual member organisations with the intent of strengthening civil society collaboration in the country. Eurochild will periodically review the selection of national partner networks, their representivity and national impact. In the area of child welfare and protection reforms, Eurochild will continue to support the advocacy work of national coordinators of the Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign.

52. Focusing specifically on the three strategic goals outlined above, we will work towards the effective involvement of members by:

- a) Consulting and communicating with members about Eurochild's political positioning on relevant issues and influencing opportunities
- b) Profiling the knowledge, experience and practice of our members to build strong evidence for Eurochild's messages
- c) Strengthening members' capacity to engage in Eurochild's advocacy work
- d) Supporting member-led advocacy activities and events at national level

53. We will know we are making progress when we see:

- a) More members being actively engaged in our advocacy work; the level of engagement will be measured through response to requests for information; sharing news of developments of their work, attending relevant events and actively using EU policies to advocate at national level.
- b) Members having increased capacity to advocate at local or national level, leveraging EU policy & funds
- c) Eurochild members are considered national experts to turn to, by the European and national institutions

Harnessing members' practice & knowledge

54. Eurochild's membership is wide and varied. Feedback from membership surveys show that exchanging knowledge and practice is an important motivation to be part of the Eurochild network. We will endeavour to provide opportunities and tools to facilitate members' networking and transnational collaboration. To the extent that resources are available, we will provide on-going support to 'thematic interest groups' both in areas where Eurochild has an already established expertise (early childhood education and care, children in alternative care and family and parenting support) and new areas of interest (children in migration, children's rights and digitalisation, child-friendly budgeting).

55. By tapping into our members' experience and knowledge we ensure our advocacy efforts are based on a strong, solutions-oriented evidence-base. Information from our members is essential to keep track of trends and developments in children's rights in Europe. We can also ensure that our members feed into peer reviews and knowledge banks sponsored by our institutional partners e.g. the European Platform for Investing in Children.

56. We will work towards this by:

- a) Facilitating member exchange and learning across thematic areas
- b) Creating thematic interest groups, led by members to assess key developments and to bring examples of possible solutions
- c) Strengthen members' engagement in Eurochild's policy work to bring together policies and research that would shape the advocacy efforts of the network.

57. We will know we are making progress when we see:

- a) More members are actively contributing knowledge and sharing practices by responding to calls.
- b) Evidence collected from members is reflected in Eurochild's policy positions
- c) Members show engagement by either participating, hosting or leading workshops or sessions. Thematic interest groups are coordinated by members and are proactively connecting with relevant actors to support policy and advocacy efforts.

Child and youth participation

58. As a child-rights network Eurochild advocates for the right of the child to be heard in all decisions that affect them. Our work on child and youth participation is both a means to an end (meaningful children's participation should be an integral part of our three strategic goals outlined above) and an end in itself. In this sense we aim to build capacity of member organisations in child and youth participation and to advocate for more and better participatory practice among our partners and those services that work directly with children – in particular those in vulnerable situations. Eurochild is also an associate partner in 'Children as Actors in Transforming Society' which beyond organising an annual conference in Caux together with children, has an ambition to strengthen inter-generational collaboration to bring about change.
59. Eurochild's Child Participation Strategy, endorsed by the General Assembly in 2017, is a commitment to reach a 'gold standard' in participatory practice in Eurochild by 2020. It foresees the progressive establishment of National Eurochild Forums (NEFs). NEFs will typically involve up to 25 children, who are invited to reach out to children at local level to gather their ideas and opinions. NEFs are expected to make the link between issues of local/national relevance and European debates and policies. The Eurochild Children's Council brings together selected representatives from the NEFs to allow transnational exchange and also provides a direct link between children and the Eurochild secretariat and management board. Through implementation of this strategy and by working with the Eurochild Children's Council and the National Eurochild Forums, we aim to embed high quality and meaningful child participation into Eurochild's activities and decision-making processes. ([Read our Child Participation Strategy](#))
- 60. We will work towards this by:**
- Involving children in Eurochild advocacy, events and internal planning primarily through the 'Eurochild Children's Council'
 - Supporting more effective participatory practices in Eurochild's membership primarily through the National Eurochild Forums. These practices will make sure that the NEFs are representative of the national population of children and especially support engagement of children in disadvantaged situations.
 - Supporting children's involvement in EU & national level advocacy
 - Providing guidelines to ensure that children and young people feel safe, empowered to realise their engagement.

61. We will know we are making progress when we see:

- The views & experience of children, of varied backgrounds, are embedded in Eurochild's work.
- More members developing & promoting participative activities of children & young people.
- The views & experiences of children themselves helping to improve policies and practices.
- Children learning from their engagement in all above activities (empowerment of children) – children bringing across their learning to their peers.
- Children and young people participating in our activities have a better understanding of the EU and Europe and they build their own capacity as self-advocates.

Partnerships & alliances

62. Eurochild works in partnership with a variety of actors be it institutional, civil society, philanthropy or media. As a core value of Eurochild, partnership allows us to bridge our membership with other civil society and institutional actors and multiply our impact.

63. Eurochild has a strategic partnership with the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs (subject to renewal in December 2017). This partnership is expected to continue until 2021. Eurochild will continue to advocate for sustainable core funding from the European Commission, believing that we play an essential role in helping the EU realise its objectives with regards to the protection and promotion of children's rights, tackling poverty and social exclusion, and the transition from institutional to community-based care.
64. Eurochild works closely with the Council of Europe and we expect our work to support the implementation of its ambitious children's rights strategy in particular in the areas of equal opportunities for all children and participation of all children.
65. The work of the UNCRC Committee continually guides our work. We are an active member of the global child rights network Child Rights Connect. We co-convene the Investing in Children Working Group of Child Rights Connect in Europe to promote public investment in the realisation of children's rights through UN human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms.
66. Eurochild will look to further consolidate its relationship with sister children's rights networks, in particular ChildPact - the Regional Coalition for Child Protection - a network of networks bringing together 600 child-focused NGOs from 10 different countries in the Black Sea region, and the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children. At EU level we will also work with members of informal group of NGOs committed to working together on mainstreaming children's rights in EU policy – the Child Rights Action Group. We will also continue to support the EU Alliance for Investing in Children to amplify our voice and policy influencing related to tackling child poverty and social exclusion. We will support emerging children's rights alliances where their goals and underpinning values match those of Eurochild, for example the Initiative for Children in Migration or the NGO Panel to support the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty.
67. Eurochild also plays a role in strengthening the visibility of children's rights in the broader civil society sector advocating for social justice, health or education policies. We are active members of Social Platform, European Anti-Poverty Network, European Public Health Alliance, the Learning for Well-being community, SDG Watch Europe and others. We will continue to build our partnerships for stronger, cohesive movements seeking positive impact in the lives of children.

VI. How will Eurochild evaluate its impact?

68. Eurochild has agreed a **theory of change and monitoring and evaluation framework** for the period 2017 to 2018. This helps the secretariat and members understand our choice of activities in the context of broader strategic goals and expected impact. The accompanying results based management tool maps our activities against outputs, expected outcomes and indicators together with guidelines on data collection. The framework is reviewed quarterly by the senior management team. We will build on the theory of change and develop a new monitoring and evaluation framework for each year's work plan.
69. **In relation to our strategic goals**, we use mainly qualitative indicators, monitoring the extent to which key EU policy documents, political statements and influential third parties (think tanks, EU media sources) reflect our advocacy priorities. We also monitor the number and quality of contacts with EU-level policy makers and politicians. The contacts we build in the different decision-making bodies both at European and national level will impact how Eurochild is perceived and the weight given to our messages in the long term.
70. **In relation to membership engagement**, we will set targets on the number of members participating in our advocacy efforts, for example how many members are using the European Semester or structural fund spending to demand higher prioritisation of investment in children, reducing child poverty and reforming

child protection systems at national level. We aim to gather qualitative evidence on how Eurochild has supported their efforts through oral and written feedback.

71. Eurochild has also adopted **indicators and targets to evaluate implementation of our child participation strategy** over the period 2017-2018. These include quantitative targets on the number of children reached (through National Eurochild Forums we aim to reach at least 100 children), and qualitative targets (children's learning through the Eurochild Children's Council and Children's Advisory Group to the 2018 Eurochild conference will be evaluated through an evaluation matrix).
72. Since late 2016 the Eurochild secretariat is using a **customer relationship management (CRM) system** which helps us to monitor our relationships with external contacts as well as membership engagement. This CRM system will be further developed to allow us to gather better evidence of engagement.
73. During the first half of 2017, the secretariat carried out a **comprehensive survey of members**, gathering information on their priorities, and feedback on Eurochild's work, how they engage and how this can be improved. This has provided input to the first draft of this strategic plan. Eurochild will conduct a comprehensive written membership survey every 2 years.
74. **We value feedback from event participants so that we can continually improve our services and approaches to events.** Using anonymous feedback systems and internal debriefs we aim to improve the experience of participants at each event.
75. Our **external reach is monitored through invitations to speak at key events, media coverage, inquiries for information and social media engagement.** We will also monitor requests to partner on key events or campaigns, write for publications and recognition of Eurochild as a thought leader on children's rights in Europe.
76. The Eurochild **secretariat regularly uses self-evaluation in its meeting practices**, which strengthens staff ownership and responsibility for team performance. In addition to annual appraisals, staff are asked to complete an annual self-assessment survey on the work environment and team dynamics. The **management board uses a self-evaluation** survey to assess performance regularly during each mandate.

VII. How will Eurochild communicate about its work?

77. The strategic plan will be the network's guide over the period 2019 to 2021. Following adoption of the strategic plan, we will produce explanatory tools in accessible language for all ages to ensure we can inform our current and future partners and stakeholders, including civil society, institutional, media, philanthropic actors and children and young people themselves. The results of our strategic plan will be communicated on an on-going basis through a variety of channels to reach many different audiences.

Our target audiences

78. **We will reach out to decision makers and politicians** through meetings, speaking at relevant events & sending tailored information according to their particular political interests. We will use the power of social media to mobilise supporters, reach decision makers directly and hold them accountable towards their commitments.
79. **Policy makers at European and national levels** are important interlocutors in developing sustainable, evidence-based solutions for children's rights protection and promotion. We will produce targeted and

evidence-based policy briefs, and share them at events and meetings to inform policy makers. We will produce infographics to build visually-enticing snippets of our arguments that link to our detailed policy briefings.

80. **Civil society actors at European and national levels and public** – Eurochild has a public newsletter to inform civil society actors and general public of key developments, resources and opportunities in the area of children’s rights in Europe. The monthly newsletter has a subscriber base of 4,000 people including academics, public sector professionals, policy makers, children engaged in Eurochild’s work and civil society actors. We host alliances like the EU alliance for Investing in Children, participate in the Child Rights Action Group and are part of other loose coalitions that help us bring children’s rights perspectives on broader issues.
81. **To engage children and young people, the Eurochild Children’s Council** will be trained to report on their work; their news and updates will be shared through social media and the Eurochild website to encourage other children and young people to become active citizens. In addition, we will produce an outreach pack on how to get involved so that the Children’s Council can reach out to other young people.
82. **Media and other influencers** – We reach out to traditional print and broadcast media through press releases announcing reports, events and reactions to key developments to reach out to policymakers, decision-makers and the public. We engage in media partnerships around key events to ensure maximum outreach. With the Eurochild Children’s Council, we aim to support greater coverage of children’s rights and voices of children in local and national media.
83. We keep **our membership** informed through a bi-weekly newsletter ‘Info Flash’. The Info Flash also has news and resources from our members, to encourage cross-connections and transnational sharing of results. We publish interviews with our members to put a spotlight on the diversity and expansive nature of children’s rights actors and organisations.

Our dissemination platforms and tools

84. **Eurochild’s website** is the main platform for gathering news and resources through which we inform our audiences of our policy positions, developments at regional and national level. Our blog invites key people to reflect on new and innovative developments to recognise the ever-evolving landscape of children’s rights. We will update the website design and structure to ensure it continues to reflect the work we do.
85. **Our social media channels** have a total following of over 10,000 people. We share news, key publications, infographics and videos resulting from our work to a broad audience, ranging from politicians to children and young people. We will support the Eurochild Children’s Council to make safe and effective use of social media. The ever changing landscape of social media requires us to continually assess our presence online and ensure we are using best practice.
86. **An annual report**, endorsed by the General Assembly, is a tool for Eurochild members & secretariat to inform relevant audiences of our impact. The Annual Report contains stories, visuals, features and case studies of developments, successful activities and lessons learnt in the year by the Eurochild network. It is disseminated amongst key actors in policy, media, civil society and philanthropy. We will aim to make our annual reports as accessible and interactive so that we can reach a greater number of our targets.
87. **We hold a bi-annual conference**, co-hosted by a member organisation to gather members and external audiences around a particular topic of interest. We will continue to hold the Eurochild Conference to offer this opportunity to bring together people, ideas and action. The unique nature of the Eurochild Conference will continue to be the engagement of children and young people who will be co-panelists, co-moderators and actively participating in the design and delivery of the conferences. These conferences will gather

attention towards children's rights from policy makers, politicians, civil society actors at national and regional level and the national media.

88. We aim to tailor our outreach activities to each relevant audience. Hence, we are building a stronger system using a **'Client Relationship Management' system** to categorise different target audiences and collect data on their interests and expertise. This will allow us to assess and improve how audiences interact with our news and information. This data will enable us to produce more relevant and targeted information and news and share it, based on the needs and choice of the audience.
89. Throughout the different channels we use, we aim to provide content that is accessible to all people. In particular, we aim to produce **content that is easily understandable by children and young people**, in keeping with our mission. We will ensure that our tools and databanks follow the soon to be adopted EU General Data Protection Regulation to ensure safety of all data.

VIII. How will Eurochild professionalise its work & ensure resources for delivery of its strategic goals?

90. The Eurochild network depends on its reputation, efficiency and funds to be able to build long-term plans, engage high level decision-makers, host its members for key events and deliver high quality evidence and arguments to put children at the heart of Europe.

Professionalisation of Eurochild's work

91. A strong foundation in communication, organisation & network development and good governance is crucial for building such a sustainable, high-performant, responsive and recognised network. We will work towards this through the following:
- a) **Improve our internal and external communications:** Communications is essential to nearly all activities undertaken by Eurochild: advocacy, membership engagement, working with children and young people and building stronger partnerships. To support implementation of Eurochild's strategic goals, we will continuously inform and adapt our tools and ways of communicating with members and external audiences.
 - b) **Build a growing, strong and engaged membership:** A professional and transparent network is based on a broad and active membership. Over the next strategic planning period Eurochild will update its membership strategy, including finding new, more targeted approaches to membership recruitment, development a membership code of ethics, and improving our membership model in order to better live our value of being a member-driven organisation and better harness expertise of the membership.
 - c) **Strengthen internal processes and our governance:** Under this new strategic plan particular attention will be given to further professionalise our work, building on internal processes and information management systems developed over the course of the past few years. These include updating and streamlining implementation of our organisation development goals and governance procedures, continuous risk assessment and internal monitoring and evaluation, improvement of our HR policies and meeting practices, implementation of Eurochild's child protection policy, and strengthening various other internal processes and procedures, for example in financial, membership and events management.

Implementing a fundraising strategy

92. Eurochild will strengthen its ongoing efforts to secure long term financial sustainability. We aim to have a broader mix of public and private funding partners supporting Eurochild's core activities as well as specific projects linked to delivery of our strategic plan. This will make the network a stronger partner towards the EU and will enable us to invest in the long-term professionalisation and sustainability of the network. For example we will focus on the following activities.
- a) **Build our internal capacity:** As of June 2017, we have a dedicated staff member for fundraising, who coordinates the efforts, administers a prospects database and maintains relationships with partners. We recently established a fundraising sub-committee of the management board, led by a board member and involving two other members from Italy & the Netherlands. We will translate our fundraising strategy into an action plan detailing the steps needed to reach the target of a mix of 40-60 percent of EU- private funds. By developing a more project-oriented approach we aim to be better equipped to present existing and potential projects to a pool of identified funders in the priority areas.
 - b) **Map & build relationships with philanthropy & corporate donors:** We will continue to identify and map relevant (strategic) partners committed to support children's rights advocacy networks. We are building a database of contacts and regularly monitoring and evaluating the impact of our efforts. We will ensure that we follow ethical guidelines to ensure that the values of future partners align with those of Eurochild.
 - c) **Draft project proposals & cases for support:** We will proactively develop cases for support, packaging and presenting different aspects of our work to prospective partners.
 - d) **Develop, pitch and pilot new approaches to income-generation & build our supporter base:** We hope to develop new means of income-generation to secure the network's long-term financial sustainability. This includes building a membership offer for philanthropy; building partnerships with the corporate sector by offering employee engagement schemes; developing training and consultancy services to harness the expertise in the Secretariat & membership.

Annex

Timeline for adoption of the Strategic Plan

Members' consultation: 16 November 2017 - 19 January 2018

Children's consultation: 1st week of December 2017 – 1 February 2018

Review by Secretariat: 2 – 20 February 2018

Adoption by Eurochild Management Board: 26-27 February 2018

Final comments from Eurochild membership: Last two weeks of March 2018

Adoption by Eurochild membership: General Assembly of Eurochild – 18 April 2018

REFERENCES – to be added to final version.

ENDS