Putting children at the heart of Europe 2020: yet a challenge

Eurochild’s Position Paper on the Europe 2020 mid-term review

“Inclusive growth means building a cohesive society in which people are empowered to anticipate and manage change, thus to actively participate in society and economy.”

Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines for the economic and employment policies of the Member States, 2010

1. FOREWORD

Eurochild's vision is a society where children and young people grow up happy, healthy and confident and respected as individuals in their own right. It is a vision which can only be achieved by the commitment and cooperation of all actors to promote rights and well-being of children and young people in Europe.

Yet we live in a society where the socio-economic status into which children are born is still probably the most important determinant of their well-being, education outcomes, and employment prospects. Children who grow up in poverty and social exclusion are less likely to achieve well at school, have opportunities to reach their full potential and the capacity contribute to tomorrow's society.

There are 100 million children living in the European Union. They represent 20% of today’s population but 100% of our future. Children’s rights and well-being have to be put at the heart of policy making – both at EU and national level. Investing in children and their well-being is therefore not only a moral obligation but also an economic priority. It is probably the most effective route towards sustainable, social, and economic cohesion in Europe.

2. INTRODUCTION: EUROPE 2020, THE FRAMEWORK FOR EU POLICY COORDINATION

Europe 2020 is not an unprecedented framework. It builds on the 2000 Lisbon Strategy. Yet, after the bumpy road the Lisbon strategy travelled from booming late 1990s to crisis stricken 2010, expectations were high for a successor strategy to deliver not only more cohesion for the EU as a whole but also to take into account changing circumstances caused by the economic, financial and spiralling social crisis.

Eurochild welcomed the new framework for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. When Europe 2020 was announced there was hope that the mistakes made under the growth and jobs framework of Lisbon would not be repeated, but that the positive aspects would stabilise or even improve. Perhaps the expectations were high, but they are yet unmet. Europe 2020 has become an unbalanced procedure, which this paper argues to restore.
“Europe 2020 puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities:

– **Smart growth**: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
– **Sustainable growth**: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
– **Inclusive growth**: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.”


The broad range of policy areas covered in the Strategy from energy, environment, research to education, youth, labour market policies and social inclusion have potential and indeed are the correct formula to aim for. Eurochild supports a wide-ranging European strategy where social protection and social inclusion policies feature as contributors to the European project.

The need to strengthen EU coordination in the social field has become even more urgent due to the increased status given to social issues in the EU Lisbon Treaty. The Treaty on European Union stipulates in Article 3.3 that the Union shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection and provides for the Union’s initiatives to ensure coordination of Member States’ social policies. The "horizontal social clause" in Article 9 in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (article 9 TFEU) is of major significance which states that: “**In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health**”. These principles are also underpinning the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines, adopted shortly after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force.

Since 2010 there has been further work done at EU level to promote social investment approaches throughout the life-cycle. The Social Investment Package of 2013, and in particular the EC Recommendation Investing in Children: **Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage** is not sufficiently visible in Europe 2020. We believe a stronger coherence has to be struck between policy guidance and funding opportunities coming from the European Union. The Recommendation Investing in Children provides a holistic rights-based approach to tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being in Europe, from providing material security to families, to ensuring access to quality services (early childhood, education, health, etc), and to involving children and young people in decision-making. It has a vision of empowering and enabling children and families to recognise and help fulfil their rights; where structural reforms contribute to the redistribution of wealth and fairness; where all actions are underpinned by equal rights of all. It is a vision which would be welcomed if transposed to Europe 2020, especially as the Recommendation clearly states its need to be implemented through the Strategy and through the use of EU Structural Funds.

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2. THE ROLE OF EUROPE 2020 AND THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER IN TODAY’S POLICY-MAKING

“Europe 2020 proposes a new growth model for Europe. One that puts employment and social cohesion at the centre. One that aims at not only smart and sustainable growth, but also inclusive growth. Inclusive and fair growth: Europe needs quality employment but also solidarity. Fight against poverty and social exclusion is part of inclusive growth.”

José Manuel Barroso, 26 November 2010

The year 2010 was regarded as a turning point in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The ‘European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion’ aimed to raise awareness about the persistence of the problem, to give voice to the concerns of those experiencing poverty and social exclusion and to renew political commitment of the European Union and its Member States. 2010 was also a milestone for the EU as a whole, with the EU Lisbon Treaty entering into force in December 2009, the appointment of the new European Commission, and the design of the Europe 2020 strategy for the coming decade. The latter process was a window of opportunity to give social inclusion a more central place in the overall strategy of the Union and to ensure that the EU as well as all its Member States develop smart and sustainable social inclusion policies alongside inclusive economic policies.

To coordinate policy actions between the EU and Member States and to ensure that the Europe 2020 strategy delivers at European level, a system of governance has been set up in the form of the Semester. Regrettably, since the first European Semester of 2011 the process has evolved to meet other emerging demands the Commission: to centralise financial crisis resolution and macroeconomic coordination.

As a consequence, the role of the European Semester goes beyond implementing the Europe 2020 targets and flagships. It has become the driving force of implementing the Stability and Growth Pact in addition to Europe 2020. As a result Europe 2020 targets that were meant to be in balance and achieved in coherence are now being prioritised one above the other. As Commission President put it:

“Our European semester also points out where we need to be bolder to tackle reforms that are needed to build a lasting and job-rich recovery. Indeed, job-rich growth and competitiveness are the overarching priority of all our action.” José Manuel Barroso, 13 November 2013

The superiority given to macroeconomic policies to achieve competitiveness and rigorous budgets has already proven to be counterproductive undermining the socially inclusive dimension of the Strategy.

Poverty levels across Europe have increased since the Strategy took off. Child poverty is at 28% in the EU, seeing an increase of half million children in only one year.² A Eurochild study shows that since the crisis began several governments have introduced expenditure cuts that are directly felt by children and their families.³ These measures have undermined their access to adequate resources, limited their access to – and damaged the quality of – service provision (eg. health, education, welfare), and restricted opportunities for children to participate fully in family and social life.

The crisis has affected all European countries, but to different degrees. Child poverty was already at unacceptable levels prior the economic crisis, with now even bigger disparities between different Member States. Yet, even more worrying are fragile levels of European solidarity and questioning the efficiency of

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² In 2011 26 million children (0-18) at risk of poverty and social exclusion; in 2012 26,5 million in EU28; Eurostat.
³ Crisis Update 2012: How the economic and financial crisis is affecting children & young people in Europe; Eurochild.
welfare systems in Europe. When social protection systems are undermined, it is the most vulnerable
groups who are most affected, among them children.

There is an increasing amount of evidence showing that growth and jobs are not the only answer to poverty
and inequalities. A recent analysis of DG Employment on income indicators reveals that, even during the
years of economic expansion prior to the crisis, economic growth did not benefit all households equally, nor
did it contribute to reduce inequalities in all Member States.

Higher levels of poverty, social exclusion and inequality not only impact on lives and chances of individuals
and generations. They also have a direct effect on the countries’ ability to trigger disposable household
income, investment and employment - and hence growth. Not to mention the high cost of addressing the
social consequences of exclusion, homelessness, poor physical or mental health and abuse. If children
grow up in poverty, their well-being today, their life chances tomorrow, and society’s future will be
irreversibly damaged. Social protection has to be coupled with social investments - and the earlier in
children’s lives the higher return on investment for society. Professor Vandenbroucke’s argument for this is
that “high levels of child poverty signal an investment deficit”. By studying child poverty statistics as ‘leading
indicators’ we can in fact forecast costly long-term social and economic divergences that require
investment.5

The widening gaps between Europe 2020 targets must be a lesson learned. The EU must recognise that it
needs a long-term vision where all objectives contribute to the other equally, supported by a mid-term
implementation strategy and cross-cutting actions.

**KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EUROPE 2020 FRAMEWORK**

**Targets**

“These five headline targets pinpoint objectives which people can relate to, and show that the EU is
leveraging reform in areas that they know are important. This is also about the political will to tackle tough
problems.” José Manuel Barroso, 24 March 2010

The way the headline targets were set in 2010 was overall hopeful. The fact that they are limited in number,
specific and from across the board is a sign of a holistic approach. Yet in many cases the national targets
lack ambition and committed follow-up, not to mention that the national targets do not add up to meet the
EU target. In addition, the poverty reduction target has clearly been quite cumbersome to agree among
Member States and seems to be the most difficult to enforce.

The three indicators applied to measure people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU allowed
Member States to choose one, or two, or to use all three of them. This flexibility undermines comparability
of progress across the Member States. Furthermore several Member States chose to use jobless
households as their indicator of poverty, overlooking the inclusion of people who are not in employment.

Data collection and analysis should be based on the same indicators across all Member States, and these
indicators should be able to bring the widest possible picture. Therefore Eurochild encourages the

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4 EU Employment and Social Situation Quarterly Review – September 2014. Towards a better measurement of welfare
and inequalities; European Commission; September 2014

5 F. Vandenbroucke We must act now to defuse Europe’s child poverty timebomb, Europe’s World 2014
Commission to request for reasons of comparability and commitment that all Member States use all three indicators identified by Eurostat.

We welcome that some Member States set (sub-)targets to reduce child poverty and social exclusion as part of their Europe 2020 objectives. We would like to see all Member States following that example, as an integral part of Europe 2020. To be able to showcase achievements on tackling child poverty at European level, we are calling on the European Commission to disaggregate the European poverty reduction target by age.

Flagship Initiatives

Each flagship initiative published by the European Commission identified a set of specific proposals and instruments that should be implemented within ten years to help achieve the Europe 2020 objectives. Eurochild looked in particular anticipation to the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion as an important opportunity to adopt a comprehensive EU approach to tackling child poverty and addressing child well-being.

The Platform however delivered few actions, remaining hardly visible in the Europe 2020 framework as an annual event of exchange between EU institutions and stakeholders. The Platform is also faced with the challenge of being compared and contrasted with the Social Open Method of Cooperation. Indeed the question remains unanswered to date how one takes account of the other and the respective contributions they make. This is not to question the need for supporting proposals in the form of Flagships, but to give recognition therein to the development of cooperation between Member States which date back before Europe 2020. The Social OMC has delivered progress on many social inclusion areas, including child poverty and well-being in converging Member States’ policies.

We are in favour of enabling the European Platform against Poverty to play a central role in ensuring all other strands of EU policy making (economic, competition, education, migration, health, innovation, justice and environmental policies) contribute to achieving the EU’s social goals, including the EU poverty reduction target.

For Eurochild it is a key priority to mainstream issues of adequate social protection, including the fight against child poverty, promoting child well-being, and children’s rights across all relevant EU policy areas and programmes, including the Structural Funds. The European Platform against Poverty should centralise monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the social impact assessment process and on the extent to which the other strands of Europe 2020 are contributing to the goal of reducing poverty and social exclusion. The Platform should continue to involve stakeholders, including European and national/regional civil society organisations. The exchanges and consultations should be more meaningful and should directly contribute to the delivery of Europe 2020 both at EU and national level.

Annual Growth Survey

The Annual Growth Survey serves to chart a clear direction on where Europe should be heading in the year to follow. It presents global priority actions which Member States should take into account in their preparation of the NRPs.
Although more attention has been given to the social consequences of the crisis in the Annual Growth Survey for 2014, it is particularly worrying that the reference to child poverty is still limited and framed in the context of labour market reform and Active Inclusion policies. It seems very distant from the proposals put forward by the European Commission last year, with the adoption of the Recommendation *Investing in Children – Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*. The Recommendation offers the right policy mix for tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being, but needs to be promoted consistently by the Commission through Europe 2020.

The Joint Employment Report should continue accompanying the AGS to elaborate on priorities falling under the Employment Guidelines. The findings of the JER include useful guidance which too often are not reflected in the summary of the AGS. Another important monitoring tool in the JER is the newly established scoreboard of employment and social indicators, as it allows for better and earlier identification of major employment and social problems with a direct link to the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure.

We see the design of the scoreboard as a recognition of the imbalance between the level of coordination and impact of macroeconomic and fiscal policies on the one hand, and social inclusion and poverty reduction on the other. A consequence of this unevenness is an increasing - and increasingly felt - social impact of crisis-resolving financial and economic measures. By assessing potential impact of planned measures on society beforehand, not only could measures damaging purchasing power and the livelihood of the most disadvantaged in society be avoided, but it would also increase the much needed legitimacy and democratic accountability of European policy coordination. To be able to maximise the scoreboard, however, it should have the same weight as the indictors of the Alert Mechanism Report.

Overall, the Annual Growth Survey could have a significant role if the three main elements of the Semester (AGS, NRP, CSR) built better on each another. However, as that is not the case, these three components are all individual reflections on how the authors of these documents see the priorities of the coming year. The Growth Survey should be a holistic reflection of progress made on all headline targets, consistently recalling them and encouraging Member States to deliver ambitious actions in all areas.

### National Reform Programmes

> “The success of the new strategy will therefore depend critically on the European Union’s institutions, Member States and regions explaining clearly why reforms are necessary - and inevitable to maintain our quality of life and secure our social models - where Europe and its Member States want to be by 2020, and what contribution they are looking for from citizens, businesses and their representative organisations”

*Europe 2020 Communication March 2010*

The National Reform Programmes were the key instruments to give national governments an ownership over Europe 2020. The Integrated Guidelines are clear in guiding expected outcomes and anticipating the logical framework.

Despite the clarity of the guidance provided, the NRPs are usually not produced in a coherent cross-sectorial cooperation or after consulting stakeholders, and are no longer a central driving force of implementing the strategy. It seems Member States were faced with difficulties to demonstrate their ambitions and it became a yearly reporting exercise on past or recent success rather than better strategic

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6 Communication from the Commission Annual Growth Survey 2014, COM(2013) 800 final
planning. Hence, the ownership of Europe 2020 weakened among the key stakeholders who could make it a reality for people, including national, regional and local governments as well as civil society.

Eurochild members suggest providing Member States with a clear NRP template so that they can report on achieved results and impact rather than activities and inputs, linking it more closely to the implementation of the CSRs while identifying the challenges and planned responses.

Country-Specific Recommendations

Unlike the AGS and most NRPs, the country-specific recommendations are concise and preceded by some cross-departmental cooperation. They are faced with the challenge of responding to the Stability or Convergence Reports in addition to the NRPs. Perhaps it is the targeted and combined characteristic that caused the Country-Specific Recommendations and their accompanying documents, contrary to the NRPs, to grow in significance in steering the strategy’s implementation.

Yet, despite the recognition in the last two years to give CSRs a stronger social dimension, there are too often still deep divergences, and sometimes even contradictions between recommendations related to macroeconomic or fiscal policies and employment or social inclusion. Interpretation of recommendations is often subject to the reader, which is why Eurochild members call to strike a balance towards more detailed CSRs. It must be ensured that Member States do not interpret the recommendations in a way which would have negative outcomes for children and young people. This also requires a much stronger correlation between the analytical findings in the Staff Working Documents and the political messages of the CSRs.

Policy coherence

Whether reflecting on exploiting more opportunities within the Europe 2020 framework or rebalancing the inconsistency in messages, the ultimate outcome is that governance of Europe 2020 needs to improve.

From the first year onwards the semester process was timed to the reporting cycle under the Stability and Growth Pact. It soon became clear there is no coincidence in having to submit or evaluate NRPs at the same time as Stability or Convergence Programmes. It is logical to assume that in times of economic, financial and social crises the smaller amount of resources have to be matched with necessary policy reform. The crisis however does not justify the prioritisation of economic growth when the strategy’s objectives only make sense if implemented in unison. A fundamental understanding is missing from the governance, namely that all Europe 2020 targets are equal in importance, in urgency, commitment and support from the European Commission.

This leads to a lack of an integrated strategy to support people across the life-cycle as stipulated by the Social Investment Package, while promoting and protecting their rights to a decent life. There needs to be a stronger coherence between Europe 2020 and policy initiatives that were launched after 2010 but which fall within the scope of its targets and flagships.

In particular for implementing the EC Recommendation Investing in Children we propose the following governance process.

Though a purely intergovernmental process, in the Social Open Method of Cooperation of the last decade Member States managed to achieve some progress. E.g. to agree common objectives and indicators; to increase the knowledge base on poverty and social exclusion in the EU and the emergence of new thematic priorities such as child poverty; or to collect valuable research data and expertise. Nevertheless it failed to
integrate the coordination process into national policy making; or boost visibility and ownership at national level.

Eurochild believes that, in complementarity with Europe 2020, the Social OMC could be a useful setting to coordinate development, implementation and monitoring of specific national strategies for tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being developed by each Member State as a part of national policy making processes. To ensure a regular and rigorous monitoring process, Member States would need to submit a detailed report to the European Commission on their national policy development in the field of child poverty and well-being every three years – reflecting delivery on national sub-targets on child poverty, and supplementing the annual cycle of the NRPs. Member States’ reports will have to be in line with the Europe 2020 targets; and drafted in a structure that is based on guidelines provided by the EU so that Member States can identify challenges, involve stakeholders in finding solutions, monitor progress, and include examples of good practices in their report.

The European Commission would gather Member States’ reports and prepare a Tri-annual Report on Child Poverty and Well-being six months after their deadline for submission. Thus, the Commission would have to evaluate every three years the policy developments on child poverty well-being and social inclusion at EU level, which would be reflected in the Country-Specific Recommendations and provide guidelines for future policy development.

**EUROCHILD’S RECOMMENDATIONS**

**I. Recall what the EU stands for**

The European Union grew out of the need for peace and solidarity in the turbulent 20th century. The outcomes are EU Treaties and an EU Charter of Fundamental Rights committing the EU to protect the rights of all people and tackle discrimination through all its actions. Article 3 of the TEU in particular states that the EU shall promote and protect the rights of the child in its external and internal actions, which the Charter echoes.

Europe 2020 has so far failed to explain how meeting its goals is beneficial for *the people* and how it contributes to fulfilling their rights. Emphasis has been overly on benefits to the economy and to a growth-friendly recovery rather than the benefits to society.

EU actions, and in particular mid- to long-term strategic planning at European level, such as Europe 2020 must be able to justify how it is making a change to people’s lives. A stronger ‘rights-dimension’ to the strategy would also help to improve the long-sought democratic legitimacy of policy coordination.

**II. Give ownership to Europe 2020 through improved stakeholder engagement, from the bottom up**

National stakeholders are key in implementing the Strategy, as they can help raise public awareness, identify obstacles and solutions, and contribute to the direct delivery of policy reforms.

Recently there has been a growing focus on the poor levels of stakeholder engagement in Europe 2020. The role civil society, including children’s rights organisations play in promoting and supporting the necessary reform at national, regional and local level, and in ensuring EU policy coherence across the Member States must be recognised. The European Commission should develop, as it has committed, a
set of guidelines for the engagement of stakeholders in Europe 2020. The guidelines should be drawn up in cooperation with the Social Protection Committee and should be monitored regularly in a specific section of the NRPs and reported on by the Commission in the CSRs and AGS. In particular these should emphasise the involvement of organisations working with children and children themselves in the Europe 2020 process.

In the Member States European Semester Officers should promote meaningful stakeholder engagement on the country’s Europe 2020 performance. The development and implementation of the National Reform Programmes must include civil society. Eurochild members also suggest promoting the Recommendation Investing in Children in particular among policy-makers drafting the National Reform Programmes.

A special session in national parliaments should be held on Europe 2020 prior to the adoption of the National Reform Programmes, including the poverty reduction target and the situation and protection of children. In the end all coordination and commitment will only have an impact if implemented by authorities at the respective levels of governance in EU Member States. The National Reform Programmes should be seen as an opportunity to plan better strategically on the short term to achieve long-term outcomes. Various ministries, relevant parliaments and stakeholders who contribute to the achievement of set targets need to be involved not only in the design, but also in the evaluation of the NRPs. Member States need to take measures to ensure that sub-national government- and local authorities are also included in this approach.

Furthermore, as the Commission also publishes the European social partners’ views attached to the JER, Eurochild would be in favour of including a consultation and the views of civil society organisations in the same way.

III. Use the necessary tools to achieve objectives Europe had set itself

Europe 2020 is not the solution to all problems of the EU. It is a process for improved policy coordination. It must not be a stand-alone process but the linkage between funding, policy guidance and monitoring.

It took all parties involved in the Europe 2020, including national members of Eurochild time to get familiar with the process and to make the most out of it. In the current setting of EU social inclusion and social protection policies the annual cycle of Europe 2020 implementation has become the key driver of national level reforms. The strategy’s initial priorities and key stages should therefore be maintained but indeed strengthened to better reflect the rights and needs of people in Europe.

IV. Keep the EU poverty reduction target, establish an EU sub-target on child poverty and social exclusion and encourage all Member States to do likewise

The role the targets play in Europe 2020 is and should be significant. The Europe 2020 headline target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty by 2020 should be kept the same until the strategy comes to an end. Backing out of commitments made is not an option as it would not strengthen but weaken the shaken cohesion of the EU.

Member States should be required to either set a specific national (sub-) target for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion - or to indicate what proportion of their overall Europe 2020 poverty and social exclusion is expected to lift children out of poverty.
More and better indicators need to be developed to measure child poverty and well-being in the European Union, hence better reflecting children’s needs and reinforcing the utility of data when evaluating implementation and impact of new and previous policies. This work should be done in coordination with the Social Protection Committee’s Indicators sub-group. The indicators should then form part of the Joint Employment Report accompanying the AGS, the Social Protection Performance Monitor which forms the basis of the Trend to Watch of the SPC, and reflected on in the Country-Specific Recommendations. Member States should be asked for specific detailed multiannual reporting on progress on child poverty and well-being, on the basis of an agreed portfolio of indicators.

V. Restore ‘social imbalances’ of European policies

A serious shortcoming of Europe 2020 is that not all (Commission and national) Europe 2020 documents are consistent with the Strategy’s principle of equal importance to all its targets. We firmly believe no Europe 2020 headline target can be prioritised over the other. In fact, a lot more must be done to reiterate how the targets mutually reinforce each another. This issue could be remedied by the demonstration of strong political will to an inclusive Europe 2020 by the new European Commission.

Eurochild calls for a more balanced approach between macro-economic and social aspects in the AGS, NRPs and CSRs with a dedication to the achievement of all Europe 2020 targets, which will contribute to a more socially inclusive and sustainable European Union and help to break the cycle of poverty.

We urge the scoreboard of social and employment indicators to become binding to the extent of macroeconomic surveillance indicators in order to prevent counterproductive measures. The indicator of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion should become part the scoreboard.

Given the negative impact that many austerity measures are having on children’s well-being, Member States should be asked to carry out ex ante and ex-post impact assessments to determine the effect that all policy measures (including macroeconomic and financial measures) will have on children and in particular on those children at greatest risk of severe poverty and social exclusion. These are important tools to assess the potential impact of policies before they are introduced and monitor the actual impact they have after being put in place.

VI. Mainstream child well-being across Europe 2020

The synergies between measures to tackle child poverty and promote child well-being, and achieving Europe 2020 headline targets beyond poverty is very rarely acknowledged. Yet, there is an EC Recommendation on Investing in Children looking at cross-cutting measures, putting the best interests of the child, equal opportunities and support for the most disadvantaged at the centre of efforts to combat child poverty and promote child well-being across Europe.

Given the low priority to date that is given to child poverty and social exclusion in Europe 2020 Eurochild recommends to:

- include a specific section in each Annual Growth Survey on child poverty and well-being and set Member States a priority each year for addressing child poverty and social exclusion in their National Reform Programmes;
- all Member States should be asked to include a specific section in their National Reform Programmes on tackling poverty and social exclusion and to include within this a specific section
on addressing child poverty and social exclusion, to ensure that the three pillar approach advocated in the Commission Recommendation is being implemented (i.e. adequate income, access to quality services and participation of children);

- develop child focussed Country Specific Recommendations for all countries with high or worsening levels of child poverty and social exclusion. These should urge them to develop a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and rights-based approach covering the three pillars of the European Commission Recommendation;

- the European Commission, with the support of the Social Protection Committee, should develop and issue to Member States clear guidance on integrating the SIP and the EC Recommendation on Investing in Children into their NRPs and NSRs.

VII. Promote and use the European Structural and Investment Funds to achieve better policy outcomes in a coherent way

Many Member States are still not making full use of EU Structural Funds to promote the social inclusion and well-being of children. Much greater attention should be given to using the 2014-2020 Structural and Investment Funds to promote social inclusion in general and the inclusion of children in particular.

Member States should be asked to report on their use of Structural Funds for promoting the social inclusion of children in their NRPs. They should also be encouraged to use Structural Funds in a strategic manner to support the implementation of their overall strategies to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. The Commission must monitor the use of EU Funds to ensure at least the agreed minimum threshold is spent effectively on social inclusion in every Member State. The Commission should continue to provide information on the role of different funds in tackling child poverty including through the promotion of the partnership principle.

VIII. Remember that policy and action should aim at improving people’s, including children’s lives

The tools mentioned above should be used in a results-oriented manner. On the road to better coordination we must not lose sight of the ultimate objective – i.e. a smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive Europe for us to live in. A Europe that regardless what policies and actions it is planning will promote and protect children’s rights as part of fundamental rights of all citizens.

To achieve that, cross-departmental working must improve in the European Commission on Europe 2020 reflecting on the entire process of implementation. Qualitative and quantitiave indicators to measure impact of policies and their coordination has to improve and increase.

Reflecting back on the first quote in this document Eurochild would like to see the dimension of empowerment in the Europe 2020 Strategy stepped up. Empowering and investing in children and their families is a prerequisite to recover from the crisis and to build, what the EU calls, a cohesive society.
EUROCHILD

Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people. We envisage a Europe where every child grows up happy, healthy and confident, and respected as an individual in his/her own right. We work:

- to promote wide recognition of children as individual rights holders;
- to convince policy and decision makers to put the best interest of the child in every decision affecting them;
- to encourage all those working with and for children and their families to take a child-centred approach;
- to give children and young people in Europe a voice by promoting participatory methods in child and family services, raising children’s awareness of their rights and supporting child and youth led organisations.

Eurochild currently has 170 members in 35 countries all over Europe (both within and outside of the EU). For more information see: www.eurochild.org

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