Eurochild calls on EU leaders to invest for children

Children born today face a daunting future. They will have to work longer to support an ageing society; they will probably have to pay for their own higher education and training; they will have to manage, with ever greater intelligence, diminishing resources in an increasingly competitive, globalised world.

Over the past 20 years a majority of children in Europe have achieved greater material wealth, but this has not translated into greater well-being. Indeed problems such as childhood obesity, risk behaviour, poor mental health have escalated. And one in five children in the European Union lived at risk of relative poverty before the crisis hit. Growing inequalities in European societies has locked many millions of children into a cycle of low aspiration, low educational achievement, poverty and social exclusion. European leaders have a choice in the current economic crisis. Acknowledging resources are scarce, we call on leaders to invest where it will make greatest difference – to focus resources on lifting children out of poverty and to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

As Member States of the European Union discuss the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, we call on leaders to prioritise investment for children, namely to:

Invest in children and make them visible in the European budgeting

The Lisbon Treaty makes the protection of the rights of the child an explicit objective of the EU, but as yet there is no specific budget line allocated to children’s rights, nor is there a way of tracking how EU spending benefits children. Every EU Member States has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and is required to undertake measures to implement children’s economic, social and cultural rights “to the maximum extent of their available resources”\(^1\). It is imperative that leaders address how children’s needs and rights are met through EU funding programmes and policies, and make children much more visible in budgeting.

Use the money to strengthen the ‘inclusive growth’ pillar of Europe 2020

Europe will not achieve its broader economic, environmental, education and social targets whilst failing to tackle inequalities experienced during childhood. The increasing number of children living at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe will not be alleviated solely through employment enhancing policies. To advance on the Europe 2020 targets, comprehensive approaches are needed to promote active inclusion as well as to tackle child poverty. It comprises a combination of measures that ensure all children have access to quality education, early childhood services, healthcare, housing, a healthy environment, sport, culture and leisure activities, etc.\(^2\) We call on Member States to retain the European Commission's proposal to ring-fence allocations for policies that promote social inclusion and the fight against poverty within the European Social Fund; and to secure adequate investment for the well-being of children.

---


\(^2\) “Child poverty and well-being is a multidimensional phenomenon ... a comprehensive approach is therefore needed to tackle it combining employment for parents, income support and access to social services, including childcare, as well as health care services and education; and involves the use of adequate human and financial resources” EPSCO Council Conclusions 17 June 2011.
Ensure proper governance and accountability of EU structural funds

The Commission’s budget proposals highlight the importance of partnerships – particularly recognising involvement of regional and local actors, non-governmental organisations and social partners. Strong civil society organisations in the children’s sector play a significant role in safeguarding, promoting and implementing children’s rights. They also support the participation of children, thereby enabling children from an early age to understand and contribute to a participatory democracy which respects and values freedom of expression. Moreover, civil society actors play a crucial role in strengthening governance and transparency for the reporting processes on EU expenditure and programmes. This contribution has to be recognised and reflected in adequate funding to support their long-term development. **We call on leaders to engage civil society at all levels and stages of the programming cycle of the structural funds, from the preparatory phase of agreeing on thematic priorities, to the fulfilment of conditionalities, the implementation and monitoring processes.**

We urge all Member States to support the above mentioned recommendations and ensure the outcome of the MFF negotiations make a positive difference to children’s lives.