

Side Event at the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth, 27 April 2018:
**The EU added value of investing in children and youth
in vulnerable situations**
- Side Event Report -



On 27 April 2018, the EU Alliance for Investing in Children hosted a side event at the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth addressing “the EU added-value of investing in children and youth in vulnerable situations”. This was organised by Don Bosco International, Eurochild, EuroHealthNet, and Save the Children International. The event aimed to share good practices to elaborate on effective ways to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR); this was envisaged with two concrete projects complimented by key research findings on the benefits of investing in children.

Speakers and moderators: Prof. Hugh Frazer, Adjunct Professor, Maynooth University ▪ María José Vuelo Bits, youth representative, Take the Reins project ▪ José Miguel Bautista, Executive Secretary, CEPSS ▪ Anna Paola Specchio, Head of Unit on Educational Poverty, Save the Children Italy ▪ Caroline Costongs, Director, EuroHealthNet ▪ Ángel Gudiña Canicoba, Executive Secretary, Don Bosco International ▪ Letizia Polizzi, Advocacy Advisor, Save the Children International ▪ Jana Hainsworth, Secretary General, Eurochild ▪ Réka Tunyogi, Head of Advocacy, Eurochild.

Toma las Riendas (Hold the Reins), Don Bosco International

‘Take the Reins’ is an innovative social programme of Salesian Social Platforms to prevent drug addiction. It offers a space where educators and young people can come together to share learning, where drug prevention is addressed applying an integrated approach; this, among other things, involves the creation of healthy youth spaces. One of the main innovations of the project has been to develop ways of intervening and training that empower the participants. In this way, they become the protagonists of their own processes of transforming reality and supporting their peers. A pivotal success factor of ‘Hold the Reins’ was the youth empowerment through their right to participate as a social inclusion experience. For more information, please visit <https://tomalasieridas.org/>

The Spotlight Project, Save the Children Italy

In 2014, Save the Children launched the campaign ‘A brighter future’ in Italy to tackle educational poverty, which deprives children of the opportunities to learn, develop skills, and establish social relations. To tackle educational poverty, Save the Children has established ‘Spotlight centres’, which are educational hub centres where children have access to educational support, music/theatre workshops, sport classes, as well as other activities. Parents have access to legal and psychosocial support and support with parenting. The goal of the Spotlight centres – 23 centres in 18 Italian regions – is to empower the community, children and parents, so that they can together play a key role in the education of children and in developing activities and networks that are relevant for the community as a whole. For more information, please visit <https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/campagne/illuminiamo-il-futuro/punti-luce>

GRADIENT and DRIVERS Research Findings, EuroHealthNet

Health of children in lower socio-economic groups is worse than of those in higher socio-economic groups. There is a systematic correlation between health status and social status: for every step down the socio-economic ladder, children and youth experience higher levels of health problems. This ‘gradient’ in health has far-reaching consequences, since health status in early life affects health across the life-course. EuroHealthNet presented findings and recommendations from two EU-funded research projects that it coordinated (GRADIENT and DRIVERS) which focused on what can be done to reduce health inequalities emerging early in life. Effective solutions address the root causes, namely the conditions leading to and perpetuating low socio-economic status. Most of the 20 principles in the EPSR address these conditions. If implemented properly, the Pillar as a whole is therefore a key tool for investing in children. For more information, please visit www.eurohealthnet.eu

Discussions

Drawing on the concrete practices and the research findings, where empowerment, participation, access to affordable quality services and prioritising resources were key components, participants were asked to suggest how the European Pillar of Social Rights could be effectively implemented to improve investments in children. This was debated in three parallel discussions:

Discussion

1

What are the lessons learned of an empowering environment, its impact on children’s development and on their contribution to society? How can we better embed such a rights-based approach in our policy making at different levels?

The discussants emphasised the importance to children’s development of empowering them by enabling them to participate and feel included in society at large. To this end the concept of child participation should be further developed, defined and promoted across all policies and levels of governance, and the necessary tools developed to enable children to meaningfully participate and convey their needs in relevant policy development processes. Notably, the issues of inter-sectoral cooperation and policy coherence were discussed. Children’s development is seen as a cross-cutting issue where commitment to and leadership across government are key to seeing to a rights-based approach fully implemented.

Discussion

2

Which strategies should be put in place at different levels to promote social inclusion of all children, yielding the best possible outcomes for children, and children in vulnerable situations in particular, through the implementation of the EPSR and as foreseen in the SDGs?

In order to promote social inclusion of all children and children in vulnerable situations in particular, the participants agreed that the principle of proportionate universalism must be applied – to avoid designing poor policies and poor quality services for poor people. The importance of ensuring coherent approaches to governance and cooperation of sectors to achieve common societal goals was also stressed during this session. Principle 11 of the EPSR focusing on childcare and support to children as well as other principles in the Pillar affecting child poverty and well-being can only be implemented through such coherent, cross sectoral policy approaches.

Discussion

3

How can the next multiannual financial framework (MFF), i.e. EU budget, include resources to reach these children and youth?

Investing public resources in policies which tackle child poverty and promote children’s well-being have long-term positive effects both on the individual and on society as a whole. Yet, there is ample room for improvement, especially in light of the negotiations on the next EU long-term budget. Participants stressed the opportunities EU funding could provide to implement the Pillar in ways that invest in children. EU and national budgets can support a strategic approach where EU policy development, national strategies and intra-governmental collaboration comes together to maximise the benefits for children. Participants also raised the need for stakeholders including civil society to be more involved in monitoring and allocation of EU funds to ensure alignment with the EC Recommendation on Investing in Children.



Key Messages

Investing in children and youth in vulnerable situations requires:

- The energetic and holistic implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Recommendation on Investing in Children.
 - Applying a life cycle approach to social investment and social protection.
 - The adoption of national poverty reduction strategies and action plans with strong support from EU level.
- ➔ This can be realised through an ambitious MFF post-2020 which has as a clear and visible priority the reduction of social exclusion and poverty of children



More messages on how the next MFF can better invest in children can be found in the statement of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children, please visit <http://www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu/the-post-2020-mff-must-invest-in-children-and-aim-to-end-child-poverty-2/>

About the EU Alliance for Investing in Children

The EU Alliance for Investing in Children brings together over 20 European networks sharing a commitment to end child poverty and to promote child well-being across Europe.

Our mission is to promote child-centred, quality and comprehensive policies to tackle child poverty and promote child well-being, by providing expert support in the development of EU and national policies, legislation and funding programmes, in line with the European Commission Recommendation ‘Investing in Children – Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage’ and all horizontal principles included therein. We are united by our commitment to a multidimensional, rights-based approach to tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being. We believe the EC Recommendation offers a valuable framework for policy development at national and subnational level, but that its impact depends on political will, resources and effective decision-making.

