
Eurochild's Strategic Plan 2019 - 2021



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Who is Eurochild?

Eurochild is passionate about achieving positive change in the lives of children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the frame for all our work. In particular, we want to see an end to child poverty and social exclusion in Europe, an end to institutional care for all children, and we want children's rights to be more visible in political discourse at all levels. We recognise that children and young people themselves need to be actively involved in shaping the change and that adults can learn from their insights and experience. That's why child and youth participation is at the heart of what we do.

Because the European Union yields a lot of political and economic power in EU Member States, accession countries and the neighbourhood region, we want to strengthen our impact on the decisions it makes. If the right decisions are taken at EU level on funding, policies and legislation, they can help move things forward nationally. That's why it's important for us as a network to engage with, influence and use the EU to leverage change at national and regional level.

First and foremost, Eurochild is a membership network. By being a part of Eurochild, members gain motivation, insight, skills and partnerships. Eurochild also provides a shared space for celebrating victories and learning from mistakes. We support national networks and coalitions, and, where appropriate, we work with other networks and alliances at European level, knowing that sustainable change requires joint efforts.

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.

Our work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Our vision is a society where children and young people grow up happy, healthy and confident and respected as individuals in their own right.

Our mission is to promote the rights and well-being of children in policy and practice through advocacy, membership exchange and research.

Our values statement says:

- We are **rights-based** meaning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child guides our work.
- We are **membership-driven** meaning we are accountable to members through our governance structures and actively seek ways to maximise their involvement in our work.
- We are a **learning** organisation meaning we are eager to learn from mistakes and to change and adapt to new realities, and to gain insights from children and young people.
- We are **collaborative** meaning we seek to work in partnership with organisations and networks working towards the same goals and operating with similar values.

- We are an empowering organisation meaning we provide accessible information, build capacities and give ownership to member organisations as well as, where appropriate, children and young people, so they inform, influence, develop and deliver different aspects of our work.

To operationalise these values we have agreed that everyone associated with the network respect the following common behavioural norms: **Integrity, Professionalism, Collaboration and Non-discrimination.**

In addition our **child protection policy** sets out our code of conduct and internal safeguarding procedures when children and adolescents are involved in our work. All members must be compliant with these standards, either signing up to Eurochild's child protection policy, or providing evidence of the organisation's own child protection policy.

Our unique contribution is that:

- **We influence relevant EU legislation, policy and funding programmes** so that they have a positive impact on policies and practices nationally and sub-nationally.
- **We build the capacity of member organisations** to strengthen the grassroots child rights movement and to enable members to influence and harness relevant EU legislation, policies and funding in their advocacy towards national (and sub-national) governments.
- **We increasingly involve children and young people** directly in our work to help us learn from their insights and to increase our impact.

What is the change Eurochild wants to see?

Goal 1 - We want to see an end to child poverty & social exclusion in Europe

We think child poverty violates children's rights and prevents the realisation of children's potential. It has consequences for the whole of society and negatively impacts the long-term development of our economies and democracies.

We think it is possible to end child poverty through effective government policy and public spending.

We think the European Union exerts considerable influence on governments' political and economic choices (in Member States as well as accession and neighbourhood countries) which can undermine or encourage national efforts to address child poverty. For example the EU's economic and monetary policies have arguably led Euro-zone countries to restrict public spending on children. In November 2017 the EU Council, Parliament and Commission proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is supposed to put social goals on a par with economic ones.

Mutual learning across Member States & policy guidance such as the *EC Recommendation on Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage* (2013) can also influence government spending and policy choices. Unfortunately the Recommendation is insufficiently used and there are no accountability mechanisms for its implementation.

In the next 3 years, we want the children's rights movement in Europe to be better equipped to advocate for policies and public spending that address child poverty.

We will have achieved this if:

- More and more Eurochild members understand **the impact of EU economic and social policies on domestic policy** & therefore dedicate own resources to influencing the EU, and to using EU political & financial power in their national advocacy.
- **Members are influencing public budgets and government spending priorities by providing robust economic evidence** on what works, in particular looking at early intervention, prevention and family support (building on the outcomes of the Childonomics research project & facilitating exchange of experience across members).
- Members are **using research & evidence gathered through the Eurochild network to advocate in specific policy areas** that contribute to ending child poverty and social exclusion from the earliest years. Building on past work and members' expertise we expect to focus on early childhood development, family and parenting support, effective financial safety-nets, inclusion of migrant children & families or other minority groups.

Goal 2 - We want to see an end to institutional care for all children in Europe

We think that children at risk of separation from their families or already in the public care system deserve particular attention because they tend to experience severe rights violations. They are also more likely to experience negative outcomes in adulthood, such as homelessness, mental health & addiction problems, or conflict with the law.

The *UN Guidelines on Alternative Care for Children* require governments to respect the 'necessity' and 'suitability' principles. But children throughout Europe are still being separated from their families unnecessarily due to poverty or discrimination. Furthermore, 'institutional' care placements, which fail to offer children secure attachments to nurturing adults, are still over-used throughout Europe.

The EU has already helped several countries reform their child welfare & protection systems away from institutional care. The regulations governing EU structural and investment funds (2014-2020) have played an important role. Eurochild has successfully helped members leverage EU policy and funding to influence national policies and public spending through its **Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign**.

In the next 3 years, Eurochild will capitalise on this past experience & will continue to help members harness EU policy & funding when advocating for child welfare & protection reforms nationally & sub-nationally.

We will know we have been successful if:

- The EU's post-2020 **multi-annual financial framework** makes deinstitutionalisation reforms an investment priority & extends the funding possibility to all EU member states, accession & neighbourhood countries
- More members are advocating for **child welfare & protection reforms** & effectively harnessing EU policy & funding - thanks to materials & capacity building offered through Eurochild

In the next 3 years, Eurochild wants to build its advocacy even more on a strong evidence base. We will have achieved this if:

- We have built the economic case for **investing in prevention**, early intervention & family support through research (linked to goal 1 on child poverty)
- We have **given a voice to children** themselves with care experience & have contributed to building a strong self-advocacy infrastructure, including care-leaver associations with capacity to advocate for better policies & practices.

Goal 3 – We want to see more recognition & understanding of children’s rights in political discourse

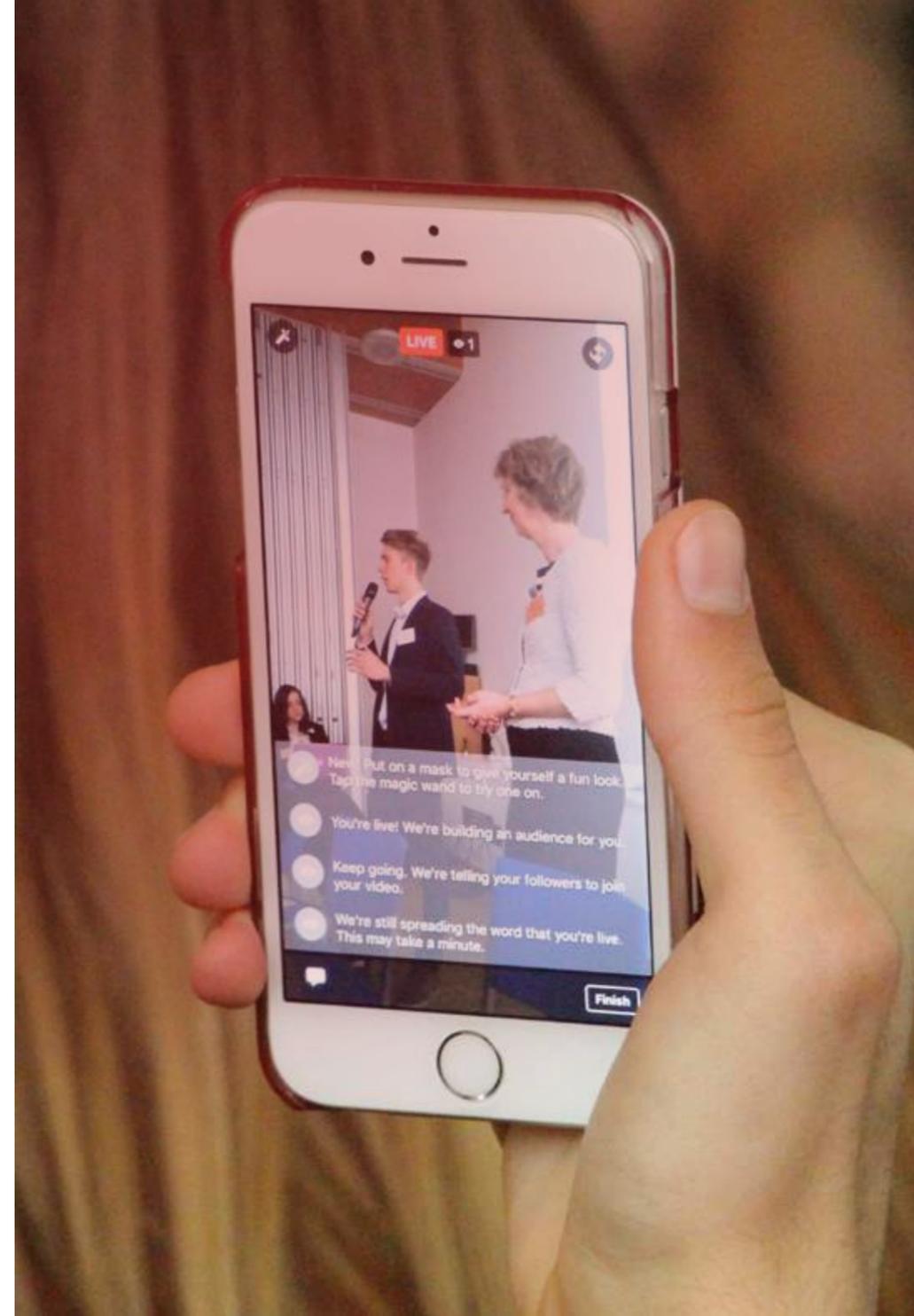
Despite being the most widely ratified international treaty, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is still largely ignored in public policy-making. We think this is a root cause of children’s rights violations across Europe. When policies focus solely on economy, security or priorities of short-term political interest, we risk undermining the best interest of the child. At EU level lots of policies impact children, but children’s rights are still largely invisible. There are no mechanisms in place to assess EU legislation, policy or funding programmes from a child rights-based perspective.

In the next 3 years, Eurochild will use its influence in the EU to achieve the following goals:

- Renewal of the **inter-group** on children’s rights in the European Parliament, explicit responsibility for children’s rights recognised in a relevant European Parliament committee, regular accountability mechanism to monitor & report how the EP is promoting & protecting children’s rights in its daily work.
- In the European Commission, a high-level **Commissioner** will champion children’s rights, and the child rights coordinator will be given adequate resources & political support to proactively support mainstreaming of children’s rights across the DGs.
- **Increased visibility** & reference to children’s rights across other EU institutions, including the Council, European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Ombudsman’s Office.

In the next 3 years, Eurochild will help members raise the political visibility to children’s rights. It will have been successful if:

- Members use the network to source information & expertise to apply in their **national campaigns** or advocacy efforts on children’s rights in domestic policy.
- **Networks** of children’s rights organisations **are stronger** advocates for children’s rights, have increased political influence, improved capacity to represent the diversity of their membership, are able to meaningfully involve children & young people in their work.



How will Eurochild contribute to making that change happen?

Across each of our 3 strategic goals we will engage in the following activities:

- **Influencing** people with power & supporting our members to influence
- **Gathering evidence** & harnessing members’ practice & knowledge
- **Engaging children** and young people in our activities
- **Working in partnership & alliances** with other organisations & networks

We will be regularly communicating with: our members, children & young people, civil society, policy makers, decision-makers and politicians.

We will continuously evaluate & adjust our work by applying a monitoring & evaluation framework, feedback from surveys, self-reflection & evaluation.

How will Eurochild be different?

In the next 3 years we expect to see the following changes in the Eurochild network:

- **Development of our internal & external communications.** We will adapt our tools & ways of communicating with members & external audiences, including children and young people, to achieve maximum out-reach & impact. We will make our work more accessible and reach outside the EU bubble by producing content that is easy to read, visual and engaging.
- **A broader and more engaged membership.** More members will use Eurochild to influence policies nationally. We will have a balanced coverage of members both geographically and from different sectors (civil society, research, public authorities, ombuds). We will have new ways of engaging members, facilitating networking & communicating their successes.
- **Strengthened governance & internal procedures.** We are guided by an organisational strengthening roadmap which is reviewed & updated annually.
- **Quality child participation is embedded into our work.** More National Eurochild Forums will be established to be able to reach out to children at a local level & connect issues of local/national relevance to European debates and policies.
- **Diversification of funding.** We will reduce our dependency on the EC operating grant to 40% of our annual income, by developing new projects and attracting philanthropy & corporate donors.

All the photos included in this publication were taken at the Eurochild General Assembly 2017 in Brussels.



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