
Eurochild's Strategic Plan



2019 - 2021



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

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Summary

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, 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.

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.



Healthcare Accessibility Center for Deaf Children and Family
Aikaterini Avgerinou
Healthcare Accessibility Center for Deaf Children and Family
Greece

Event

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. 16 members responded to the consultation between November-January. A final round of comments / amendments is possible prior to adoption 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. Members were invited to consult with children and young people on the draft strategy. Members from Bulgaria, Estonia, Malta and Ukraine consulted a total of 186 children aged 10-17.

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.




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LETIGANG

II. Introducing Eurochild

5. Eurochild is a network of 171 organisations and individuals from 34 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. 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.** We are accountable to our members through our governance structures. We use various membership engagement tools to ensure our work reflects members' expertise, needs and interests, and helps them achieve their goals. Members' engagement of our advocacy is especially important if we are to impact policies at EU and national levels. We also facilitate collaboration, networking and partnerships among members.

10. **Learning organisation.** We are responsive to changing environments, be it in policy, research or the broader political or civil society sector. We are eager to learn from mistakes and to change and adapt to new realities. We are committed to learning from the insight and experiences of children and young people, and adapting our work to reflect their ever changing realities and ensure maximum impact. 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 measured against agreed indicators. Where possible we will involve members in designing this framework and collecting relevant data to measure impact. To the extent resources allow, we will invest in external evaluation and capacity building to improve how we work and strengthen our impact.

11. Partnership. We seek to collaborate with other organisations and networks working towards the same goals and operating with similar values. We establish and participate in partnerships, alliances and umbrella networks where they bring added-value and we can contribute. We are transparent about our areas of interest and expertise, seeking to play to our strengths and to those of our partners. We regularly evaluate these external partnerships.

12. Empowering organisation. We aim to ensure members have equal access to information and opportunities to participate fully in the network. This includes ensuring our outputs are accessible and understandable to a broad audience, and finding more and better ways for members to engage and, where appropriate, to take a leading role in implementing Eurochild's activities. Through our child participation strategy, we will take account of the views of children and young people. We will build their capacity to engage meaningfully in our advocacy work and embed children's participation into our events and within our governance structures.

13. To operationalise these core values, we have agreed that everyone associated with the network (staff, management board, volunteers and members) respect the following common behavioural norms.

- **Integrity.** We share a common commitment to the values of Eurochild. We are respectful and honest towards each other, seeking to build trust and quality relationships within the network.

- **Professionalism.** We are committed to make a difference to the lives of children. We seek to apply and develop our professional skills in the best way possible to further the goals Eurochild and our respective organisations.

- **Collaboration.** We seek to find ways to reinforce each other's work and to create synergies between members and between members and the network as a whole.

- **Non-discrimination.** We treat everybody equally. We do not discriminate on any grounds.

14. **Our Child Protection Policy** sets out Eurochild's core child protection principles and values, its Code of Conduct and internal safeguarding and reporting procedures which must be applied whenever 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 way of working

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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

18. 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.

19. 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, we will support implementation of the Council of Europe's Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) where there are synergies with our priorities, and we will 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 reinforce the European Union's commitment to human rights institutions, and therefore recognise the EU Agency on Fundamental Rights as an important institutional partner.

External EU context

20. 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.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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

25. Eurochild currently gathers 171 members in 34 countries (EU 28 + FYR of Macedonia, Ukraine, Serbia, Switzerland and Kosovo). This includes 126 full members, 42 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.

26. 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;
- 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 22 National Partner Networks in 18 countries and has observer NPNs in 6 countries.

27. 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.

28. 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).

29. 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 successfully secured 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?

30. 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 financial supports. 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.

31. 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.

32. 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.

33. 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: We want to see an end to child poverty & social exclusion in Europe

34. Children are at higher risk of poverty than the population as a whole, 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.

35. The EU provides several important political hooks that can, if appropriately used, encourage Member States (and accession and neighbourhood countries) to prioritise policies that tackle child poverty and promote investment in children. The Pillar of Social Rights, proclaimed by Heads of State in Gothenburg on 17th November 2017, includes principle 11 focused on childcare and support to children. It states that:

“children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality; children have the right to protection from poverty; children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities”.

Eurochild will advocate for effective implementation and monitoring of this principle, linking it to follow-up of the *2013 Recommendation on Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*. 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 EC Recommendation on Investing in Children.

36. 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 can 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 will 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.

37. 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 promote the implementation of the key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care drawn up in 2014 by DG Education and Culture of the European Commission

38. 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 on Investment in Children of Child Rights Connect.

39. We believe the EU will have a positive impact on helping governments tackle child poverty & promote social exclusion if:

- Child poverty is a political priority in the EU's social and economic coordination mechanisms.
- Child poverty is an investment priority in the post-2020 budget of the EU.
- More and better indicators are set at EU level for implementing Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on protection children from poverty and provision of childcare - reflecting the Recommendation on Investing in Children.

40. We want Eurochild members to better advocate for policies & public spending that address child poverty & social exclusion, & believe 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. 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.



STRATEGIC GOAL 2. We want to see an end to institutional care for all children in Europe

41. 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.

42. '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.

43. 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.

44. Eurochild recognises that reforms of child welfare and protection systems are determined nationally or sub-nationally, therefore our efforts are 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.

45. 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.

46. We will know we have been successful in this strategic goal 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.
- 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.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3. We want to see more recognition & understanding of children's rights in political discourse

47. 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.

48. 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.

49. 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 the EU institutions such as the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions to raise their awareness of children's rights.

50. 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.

51. 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.



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

52. 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.

Influencing people with power & supporting our members to influence

53. 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. Eurochild secretariat has a dedicated policy and advocacy team which monitors and influences EU policies and processes. However, our effectiveness depends on the extent to which 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.

54. Engaging in sustained advocacy work requires 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.

- With regards to strategic goals 1 (child poverty) and 3 (children's rights), Eurochild relies significantly on national partner networks – the 'go-to' national membership organisation which convenes children's rights organisations in a national (or sub-national) setting. We will continue to facilitate exchange and learning among the networks on national child rights advocacy and build capacity on opportunities and benefits of EU influencing to strengthen the alignment with national advocacy efforts. Eurochild will periodically review the selection of national partner networks, their representivity and national impact. In countries where Eurochild has no national partner network, we will reach out to existing networks or support civil society collaboration efforts of our individual member organisations.

- With regards to strategic goal 2 (child welfare and protection reforms), Eurochild supports the advocacy work of national coordinators of the Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign.

- Depending on available resources, members' interest and opportunities to effectively leverage EU policy and funding, Eurochild will focus capacity building efforts towards different member organisations and eventual partnerships with other networks.
- If funding allows, Eurochild will allocate some budget and human resources of the Secretariat to strengthen the advocacy efforts of national member organisations according to their own priorities, assuming a strong link with Eurochild's expertise and strategic goals.

Gathering evidence & harnessing members' practice & knowledge

55. Effective advocacy is built on strong evidence. Where appropriate (and resources allowing) Eurochild will participate in relevant research projects, and keep abreast of research results. According to our strategic goals and funding opportunities, Eurochild will engage in projects that enable us to build the necessary evidence. We will prioritise members' experience and knowledge when building our evidence-base and ensure members have opportunities to feed into research project, peer reviews and knowledge banks lead by partners e.g. the European Platform for Investing in Children.

56. 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).

Engaging children and young people in our work

57. 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 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.

58. 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.

[*\(Read our Child Participation Strategy\)*](#)

59. We will work towards this by:

- a) Involving children in Eurochild advocacy, events and internal planning primarily through the 'Eurochild Children's Council'
- b) 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.
- c) Supporting children's involvement in EU & national level advocacy
- d) Providing guidelines to ensure that children and young people feel safe, empowered to realise their engagement.

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

- a) The views & experience of children, of varied backgrounds, are embedded in Eurochild's work.
- b) More members developing & promoting participative activities of children & young people.
- c) The views & experiences of children themselves helping to improve policies and practices.
- d) Children learning from their engagement in all above activities (empowerment of children) – children bringing across their learning to their peers.
- e) 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.

Working in partnership & alliances with other organisations & networks

61. 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.

62. 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.

63. 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.

64. 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.

65. 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.

66. 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?

67. 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.

68. **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.

69. **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.

70. 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).

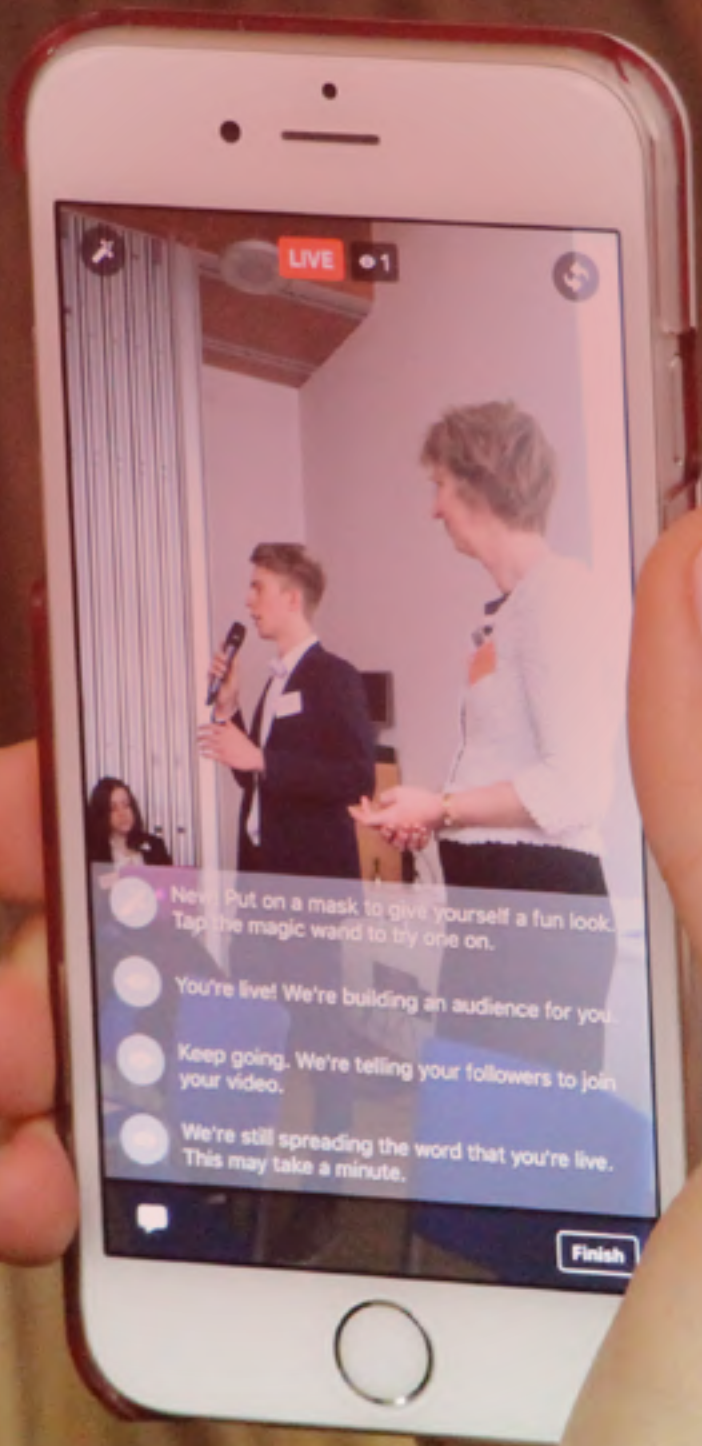
71. Since late 2016 the Eurochild secretariat is using a **customer relationship management (CRM) system** which helps us to monitor our relationships with external contacts as well as membership engagement. This CRM system will be further developed to allow us to gather better evidence of engagement.

72. 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.

73. **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.

74. 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.

75. 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.



LIVE 1



New! Put on a mask to give yourself a fun look. Tap the magic wand to try one on.



You're live! We're building an audience for you.



Keep going. We're telling your followers to join your video.



We're still spreading the word that you're live. This may take a minute.

Finish

VII. How will Eurochild communicate about its work?

76. 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

77. **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.

78. **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.

79. 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.

80. **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.

81. **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.

82. 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

83. **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.

84. **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.

85. **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.

86. **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-panellists, 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.

87. 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.

88. 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?

89. 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

90. 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. Our membership recruitment strategy will focus on achieving a more balanced coverage of members both geographically and from different sectors (civil society, research, public authorities, ombuds).

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

91. 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 volunteer members. 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.

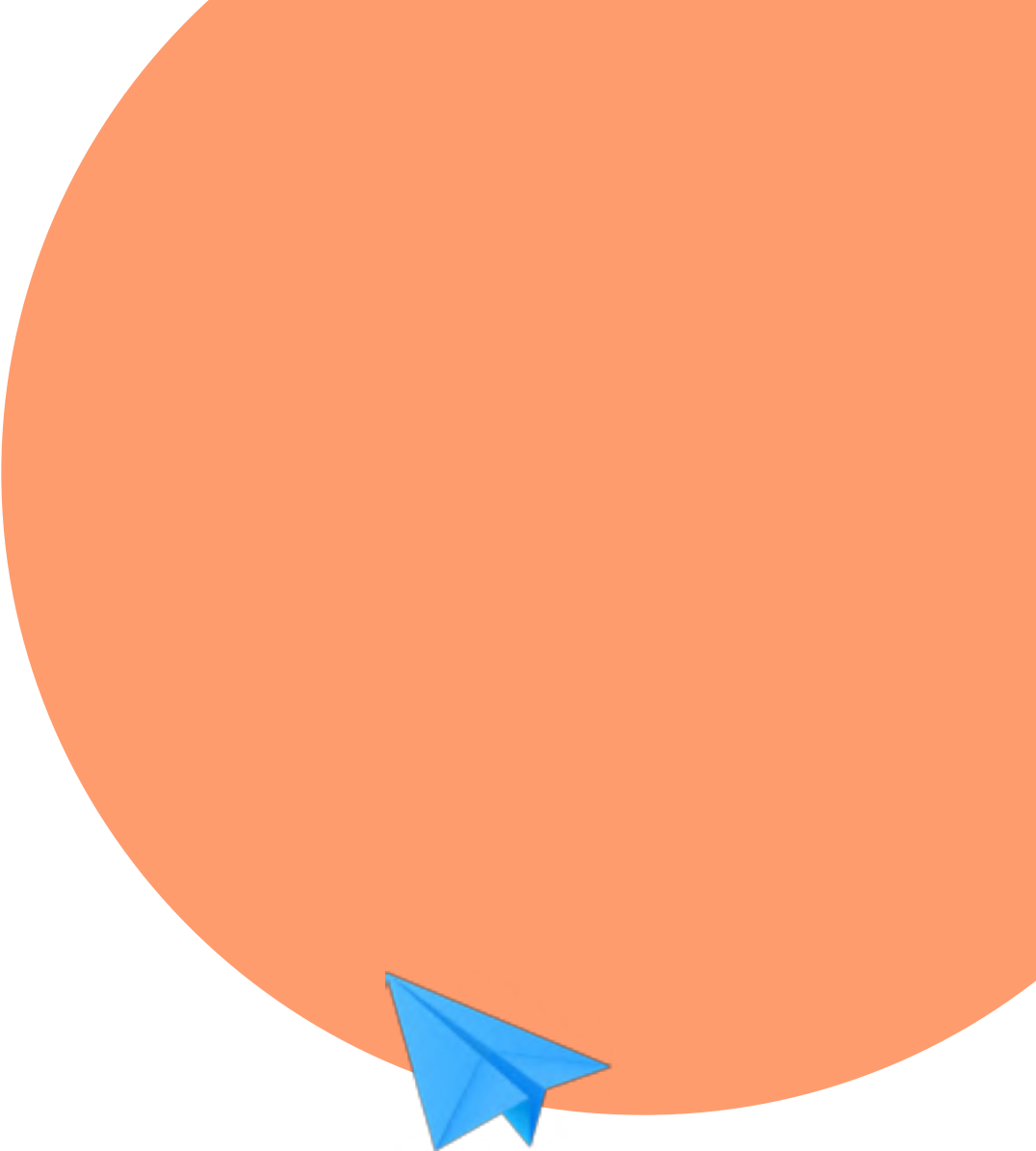
b) Map & build relationships with philanthropy & corporate donors: We will continue to identify and map relevant (strategic) partners committed to support children's rights advocacy networks. We are building a database of contacts and regularly monitoring and evaluating the impact of our efforts. We 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.



All the photos included in this publication were taken at the Eurochild General Assembly 2017 in Brussels. Photos and design ©DavideRambaldi-Eurochild



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

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