

**EUROCHILD**  
**NATIONAL PARTNERS' NETWORK**  
**7<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

I am truly pleased to have the opportunity to join you at the beginning of this important session of our periodic National Partners' Network discussions.

These discussions are very important, as they are an opportunity for sharing the work that is being done by the Secretariat on a regional level, but also, and equally important; to share and discuss your invaluable work and your first hand experiences on a National level.

This sense of understanding each other's work is very important, as we must feed into one another's work to ensure that Children's Rights are effectively on the Agenda at all levels.

Therefore, I would like to welcome you to this important session, whereby we need to share what is happening on the ground across Europe in particular about Child Poverty.

Child Poverty is a most important issue and concern as, as we all know, it impacts in a multi-dimensional way the lives of children.

Child Poverty has unfortunately been with us for a long time, and even more so now during these uncertain times that are brought by the pandemic.

All recent research studies, conducted by UNICEF, OECD and other organisations are clearly indicating and highlighting that Child Poverty is on the rise due to the pandemic, and is creating even further havoc in the lives of those who were already vulnerable and disadvantaged, before the onslaught of COVID-19.

I am informed that during yesterday's session you have discussed and shared your thoughts on the work regarding the European Semester and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

I therefore, see it is most befitting that today you will discuss and share your thoughts, your aspirations and your actual inputs regarding Child Poverty and in particular the Child Guarantee.

The CHILD GUARANTEE is a very important topic for us all. Investing in Children to prevent and reduce CHILD POVERTY is a shared aspiration and a commitment within and across our network in Eurochild.

I am convinced that we also mutually acknowledge the increasing urgency for a Child Guarantee to be put in place and get implemented.

I feel that it is correct in the process of this introduction for us to acknowledge the fact, that there has never been as much political commitment, as now, by European institutions, particularly the European Parliament and the EU Commission.

It is encouraging to see that the President of the EU Commission has very explicitly acknowledged the need to work on a Child Guarantee, so much so, that she has mandated a specific Commissioner, Commissioner Nicolas Schmidt to work on the development of such a Guarantee.

Ursula von der Leyen has been catalyst to provide the much-needed visibility and spotlight on the need that Europe must invest in Children.

The fact that she mandated a Vice-President, Vice-President Dubravka Suica for a Children's Strategy is also a significant fact regarding the sense of commitment that this European Commission has towards children.

Never before the European Commission has afforded as much visibility, attention and resources to put children at the top of its agenda.

I must also mention the amazing commitment of the Vice-President who has not only addressed our Annual General Conference but has again asked to meet us, as Eurochild, a couple of few weeks ago to share with us her specific Agenda and work for the forthcoming months. Vice President Suica has already committed herself to be with us again, during the November conference. This is definitely telling how much she is committed to give not only the visibility to children but also her disposition to Eurochild and her recognition of Eurochild as a valuable contributor in the process of the development of an EU Children's Strategy.

All this should give us great hope, that our work will be taken on board and therefore this political commitment by the EU Commission should give us the necessary encouragement for the future of our endeavours and work.

It is also encouraging to note that the Commission is saying that The Child Guarantee initiative will be published in early 2021, and that it will have links to the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and to the EU's social agenda.

I can assure you that together, we will continue to influence the content of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. Our network through Eurochild, is an important partner in the Child Rights Action Group (CRAG), which has already presented to Vice President Suica, the Joint Position Paper on a Comprehensive Child Rights Strategy.

Eurochild is definitely much in business and at the core of it.

In fact, we are also, as Eurochild monitoring the building of this essential framework and lobbying for the much-needed funding.

We are tirelessly pushing for a Council Recommendation regarding the Child Guarantee, as this will ensure that the Child Guarantee will have the highest level of commitment within the European Union to truly and effectively put child poverty to history.

Having said all this, however, we all know that political commitment is not enough, neither is planning and nor creating strategies.

All our work will go to nothing, if we do not get the needed financial backing to implement the strategies and convert them into practical policies and implement them to the full.

The much-needed funds for the implementation of a Child Guarantee are not yet committed by the Council.

The EU budget discussions and necessary decisions are not yet taken.

We know that many a time most of our governments are interested in the short-term success of our economies and for some, investing in children is a far-away objective.

It is so essential that we do not take things for granted and that we think that what we know as Child Rights Activists and Organisations, is visible to our authorities, therefore we need to tirelessly remind everyone on a national and European level, that sustainable development needs sustainable investment and sustainable investment is investing in children.

We need to work very hard on a national level, as our governments are first and foremost considered with their national performance.

We need to network and lobby and encourage our governments to take up the initiative of affording the necessary funding to invest in our children:

- (i) if they want a better Europe,
- (ii) if we want to ensure that no one will be left behind,
- (iii) if we want our children to grow in dignity and enjoy their much-deserved rights.

This is the only way to end Child Poverty, therefore we truly need to work on a national level.

We need to campaign with our respective governments.

We need to make our societies and communities aware of the need to invest in children and of the positive outcomes that can be reaped for our respective countries and Europe as a whole, if we invest sustainably in our Children by addressing Child Poverty in all its dimensions through a child guarantee.

I urge you and encourage you to use all your availability and means to influence your policy makers, politicians and governments to push for the needed funds for an effective Child Guarantee.

Dedicated funds for the Child Guarantee are subject to decisions taken within the Council for Heads of Government or State and our respective Ministers.

This is where we need to go to. We need, not only the necessary political will but even more so we need also political determination to go from words to action.

You, therefore, need to work to influence your respective governments. This is crucial now and therefore I encourage you to build a systematic plan of action to get a National Campaign going to ensure that the needed funds for this guarantee, is actually dedicated.

I am pleased to note that some National Partners' Networks and individual organisations have started this campaign, however, even those who have started must understand that this is an ongoing campaign until we secure the necessary European Funds.

Coming myself from long years in politics, I quite understand how this goes, and therefore if any of you would like to discuss the idea of building up strategic plans to advocate respective government authorities, please feel free to tell to support.

I must emphasise that the EU budget talks are not concluded and therefore we are in time to push to ensure that this year the necessary resources are put aside to tackle child poverty.

The European Parliament and the Commission already support the recommendation of putting aside 5% from the next 7-year European Social Fund in every country for this important Child Guarantee.

Now there is the need for our push with our national governments. Our governments are detrimental, to ensure that the Child Guarantee will take off the ground.

It is through the availability of the necessary funds that we can ensure the implementation of the long needed reforms, in the best interest of all the children living in Europe, and in particular, in the best interest of all the children living in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations.

Let's all do our part.  
Let's all work together.

This is our only way forward for the dreams and aspirations of all children in Europe to come true.

I have so much HOPE and CONFIDENCE in you all!



H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca  
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