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National Correspondents and Research Advisory Group

An overview of the National Correspondents and Research Advisory Group members involved in the DataCare project.

Terms of Reference for National Correspondents in the DataCare project

Introduction

In the [DataCare project](#), Eurochild and our partners UNICEF envision the development of comparable benchmark indicators to enact progress towards convergence in the type of data and the way that it is collected on children in alternative care (CiAC) across EU Member States. To achieve this goal, we recognise the importance of cooperating with national-based experts who, as National Correspondents, will help us 'map the data collection systems of their respective countries.

This document outlines a Terms of Reference to detail the roles and expectations for National Correspondents to engage with the Eurochild Research Team for the DataCare project.

Background to the DataCare project

The DataCare project is a joint initiative of Eurochild and UNICEF. It is an ambitious and transformative European initiative that will map the data collection systems on alternative care for children in alternative care (CiAC) in the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom (UK) as they currently exist. Launched in March 2020, the final results will be published by September 2021.

While the mapping exercise is groundbreaking in itself, Eurochild and our partners UNICEF plan to utilize the findings for evidence-based advocacy for systemic reform of how data on CiAC is monitored and published across EU Member States.

The DataCare project therefore comprises three components:

1. Carry out a comprehensive mapping to understand how Member States currently collect, report, and use child protection data. It will identify 'good practice' examples of countries with strong data collection systems, as well as important trends and gaps.
2. Comparatively analyse countries' data collection systems to identify what, if any, comparability exists across countries. This will better equip intergovernmental, governmental, and non-governmental stakeholders to track and compare trends in relation to entry into care (stock and flow), quality of care and leaving care.

3. Develop an advocacy campaign based on the analysis to track and influence the planned EU Council Recommendation for a European Child Guarantee. Our evidence-based recommendations will call for proposals to monitor, through comparable indicators, progress in child protection reforms.

The role of National Correspondents in the DataCare project

To help us achieve our goals to influence child protection reform, Eurochild is looking to cooperate with experts, or emerging experts, in the field of academic research and policy-influencing for CiAC. We wish to cooperate with experts as National Correspondents from each country of the study to support the mapping of CiAC data collection systems in the EU 27 and the UK.

National Correspondents will play an enabling role in this research by completing the National Template designed by the Eurochild Research Team to map the data collection system at national level. Being part of this EU-level development is an opportunity to achieve demonstrable systemic policy change to help improve the lives of children in alternative care, and be clearly recognised for this contribution.

A Research Protocol, outlining the vision and methodological approach will guide the completion of the National Template.

Completion of the National Template will enable an in-depth assessment for alternative care data systems in Europe. Participation is therefore an opportunity for experts to feed into European and national policy change, facilitated through the expertise of Eurochild and the UNICEF European and Central Asian Regional Offices.

What tasks will National Correspondents carry out?

As National Correspondents, participating experts will be tasked with completing the National Template. This will involve:

- verifying sources around national data collection on alternative care in their respective country
- translating of national definitions related to alternative care into an international framework
- providing most recently available data on CiAC in their respective country
- identifying national data collection tools, policies and legislation, research, debates and developments
- communicating on an ongoing basis from October 2020-September 2021 with the Eurochild Research Team, via webinars and calls, to discuss the Research Protocol, the National Template and relevant research updates when necessary.

Profile of the National Correspondents

Candidates interested in becoming National Correspondents should possess the following profile:

- already working in research, or completing early-career research, in the area of child protection reform and data collection analysis across the EU and the UK
- possess an in-depth understanding of national child protection systems and an understanding of international child protection terminology
- possess an understanding of the data infrastructure for CiAC at national level, for example, such as the tools (e.g. statistical questionnaires) and instructions used to collect and evaluate data
- familiarity with data collection tools, policy and legislation relevant to child protection and alternative care systems in their respective countries of the study
- established relationships with national and/or local authorities with responsibilities for child protection and alternative care and national statistical agencies.

How will the Eurochild Research Team support the National Correspondents?

Eurochild will support the contribution of National Correspondents to the DataCare project by:

- providing the National Template and the Research Protocol to National Correspondents, as well as providing an overview of its use through an introductory webinar
- coordinating centrally the national mapping exercise, and supporting National Correspondents to complete the National Template
- providing support through ongoing communication with National Correspondents, from initial engagement through to conclusion of the agreed cooperation, via webinars and calls
- supporting capacity building and facilitating network development for National Correspondents through contact with fellow Correspondents and EU child protection stakeholders.

Conditions of collaboration

The ambition of the DataCare project is transformative in nature, and seeks to harness existing data and national expertise to issue powerful evidence-based recommendations for EU Member States to improve how they collect data on CiAC. In order to achieve this goal under constrained resources, Eurochild is looking to cooperate with experts with the above profile on a voluntary basis.

While this collaboration is to be voluntary, experts who engage in the DataCare project will have the opportunity to contribute to a landmark European comparative study on children in care. As experts engaged in the study, National Correspondents will be recognised clearly for their contribution towards demonstrable and lasting change for children in alternative care.

To apply

Interested experts are invited to submit their expression of interest in the form of a Curriculum Vitae and an accompanying cover letter to Ciaran.odonnell@eurochild.org. An application should clearly set out how the candidate meets the outlined profile for National Correspondents.

Upon a successful application to the role, National Correspondents will sign with Eurochild a Letter of Intent, to formalize their contribution to the DataCare project.

Additional inquiries can be sent to Ciaran.odonnell@eurochild.org.

DataCare project National Correspondents

Eurochild and UNICEF are collaborating with leading national-based experts, across the EU and the UK to map national alternative care data collection systems.

Our 'National Correspondents' are already working in research in the area of child protection reform and data collection analysis across the EU and the UK. They are well-versed with data collection, policy and legislation relevant to alternative care for children in their respective countries. In some cases, they already possess established relationships with national and/or local authorities responsible for alternative care and national statistical agencies.

The 58 DataCare National Correspondents

Country	Name		Organisation
Belgium	Maud	Stiernet	Independent researcher
Belgium	Johan	Vanderfaeillie	Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Bulgaria	Evgeniya	Toneva	Know-how Centre for Alternative Care for Children, New Bulgarian University
Croatia	Andrea	Ćosić	University of Zagreb
Croatia	Snježana	Sekušak-Galešev	University of Zagreb
Croatia	Lucija	Vejmelka	FICE Croatia
Croatia	Petra	Hrvoj	FICE Croatia
Croatia	Ivana	Boric	University of Zagreb
Croatia	Maja	Laklija	University of Zagreb
Cyprus	Marios	Kantaris	Open University of Cyprus
Czechia	Kristýna	Jůzová Kotalová	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Czechia
Czechia	Michal	Šíp	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Czechia
Denmark	Mette	Lausten	Danish Centre for Social Science Research (VIVE)
Finland	Pia	Eriksson	The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare
Finland	Anna	Tiili	Central Union for Child Welfare Finland
France	Isabelle	Frechon	CNRS – laboratoire Printemps - Université Paris Saclay
Germany	Zoe	Clark	University of Siegen
Germany	Fabian	Fritz	Hamburg University of Applied Sciences
Germany	Tilman	Lutz	Hamburg University of Applied Sciences
Germany	Lotte	Pörksen	Hamburg University of Applied Sciences
Greece	Eleni	Drakopoulou	Independent researcher
Greece	Katerina	Nanou	Independent researcher
Hungary	Maria	Herczog	Family, Child, Youth Association
Hungary	Gaspar	Fajth	Independent researcher
Hungary	Andrea	Racz	University of Eötvös Loránd, Department of Social Work
Ireland	Maria	Corbett	Trinity College Dublin
Ireland	Robbie	Gilligan	Trinity College Dublin
Ireland	Eavan	Brady	Trinity College Dublin
Italy	Enza Roberta	Petrillo	Sr. Independent Researcher & Research Member of the Unesco Chair in Population, Migrations and Development, Sapienza University of Rome
Italy	Paola	Milani	University of Padova

Country	Name		Organisation
Lithuania	Dalija	Snieškienė	Vytautas Magnus University
Lithuania	Vytautas	Kirka	Vytautas Magnus University
Lithuania	Ilona	Tamutienė	Vytautas Magnus University
Lithuania	Laura	Misiukoniene	VŠĮ Auto moto group
Malta	Remenda	Grech	Directorate for Alternative Care (Children & Youths), Foundation for Social Welfare Services
Netherlands	Erik Jan	de Wilde	Netherlands Youth Institute
Poland	Agnieszka	Golczyńska-Grondas	University of Lodz
Poland	Marta	Danecka	The Polish Academy of Sciences
Poland	Agata	Skalec	University of Warsaw
Poland	Magdalena	Błaszczyk	University of Lodz
Portugal	Sergio	Araújo	Independent researcher
Portugal	Véronique	Lerch	Independent researcher
Portugal	Vânia	Pinto	University of Oxford
Romania	Daniela	Tarnovschi	Life and Light Foundation
Romania	Gabriela	Dima	University of Transylvania Brasov
Slovenia	Tamara	Narat	Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia - Child Observatory
Slovenia	Adriana	Aralica	Legal-Informational Centre for NGOs - Slovenia
Slovenia	Urban	Boljka	Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia - Child Observatory
Spain	Jorge	Fernandez del Valle	Child and Family Research Group, Department of Psychology at University of Oviedo
Sweden	David	Pålsson	Stockholm University
Sweden	Hilma	Forsman	Stockholm University
UK-England	Lisa	Holmes	University of Oxford's Rees Centre
UK-N. Ireland	Claire	McCartan	Queens University Belfast
UK-N. Ireland	Thomas	Doherty	Health and Social Care Board
UK-N. Ireland	Heidi	Rodgers	Department of Health, Government of Northern Ireland
UK-Scotland	Marion	Macleod	Independent researcher
UK-Scotland	Alex	McTier	Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS)
UK-Wales	Martin	Elliot	Cardiff University

Terms of Reference for the Research Advisory Group

Background and main aim of this research project

The need for timely and reliable quantitative and qualitative data on children without or at risk of losing parental care is of crucial importance for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of comprehensive de-institutionalisation strategies. Indeed, the systematic collection of accurate data on the numbers and characteristics of children in care, the root causes of institutionalisation and the function of the child protection system as a whole is crucial and can help ensure better policies, improve the state's ability to protect and promote children's rights and lead to sustainable reforms and better outcomes for children.

Data collection and dissemination in the area of child protection continues to be haphazard and often relies on NGOs and other actors to interpret the available data, analyse disaggregation and bring this to the attention of policy makers. National child protection policies and practices often lack monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks including an agreed set of national child protection indicators, and child protection data system vary greatly in terms of their level of development. It is therefore difficult to trigger EU legislative initiatives without a sound evidence base and strong child protection data systems. With this in mind, *Eurochild will, in partnership with UNICEF, map the child protection data systems across the EU Member States.*

The study will build on the findings of a feasibility phase carried out in 2019, which mapped the data system and corresponding data available in 4 EU countries (Bulgaria, Estonia,³⁹ France and Ireland). This study aims to achieve a sustainable impact on policy making and strengthening child protection data systems at EU and national level. This study will seek to take advantage of the window of opportunity offered by a new EU legislature, the development of the Child Guarantee in Europe along with the evolution of the TransMonEE database.

The results of the study will inform a discussion paper and policy briefing that will identify recommendations to the EU.

Purpose and composition of the Research Advisory Group

This project is inspired by the [survey](#) Eurochild did in 2010 on Children in Alternative Care, and we will be using this opportunity to better understand what data EU Member States collect in the child protection system & how it is used, & what would be helpful to be able to compare across countries to support policy development- & potentially the child guarantee implementation.

The Research Advisory Group (RAG) is set up to provide overall research guidance and non-binding expert advice to the project in order to maximise the impact of the project results. This group, chaired by Maria Herczog, is serving as an advisory body, a thoughtful sounding board for the project involved in its design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The group was selected to ensure that there is a balanced mix of: 1) researchers/academics with strong analytical experience in comparative and cross-country analyses in the broader & related areas of Children in Alternative Care, particularly European comparatives; and 2) experts in national data collection systems in child protection, including or with close contact to government officials with responsibility for data collection. This composition will assist the research team in advising on the scope of the research based on the draft study protocol that Senior Research Coordinator will develop, but it will also be a helpful 'sound check' for any recommendations that emerge for national level data collection.

Members of the RAG are not representatives of any sector or organisation, but contribute their own experience, knowledge and strategic thinking to the Research Advisory Group. Research advisory group members are held to confidentiality concerning the project. Preliminary project results may not be used for advocacy or any other purposes without prior agreement by Eurochild and UNICEF.

Responsibilities and deliverables

Research Advisory Group members' responsibilities include:

- To advise the project team (comprised of Eurochild & UNICEF representatives, the Senior Research Coordinator and the chair of the RAG) on the structure, content, concepts and methodology of the agreed research outputs (including a study protocol, mapping of data collection in child protection systems across EU Member States, coordinating fieldwork at national level to fill gaps in data provision and write up of agreed reports) in order for the study to achieve its overall objectives;
- To act as a critical friend in relation to the overall shape, academic direction, methodology and policy relevance of the research;
- To support the project in its awareness raising activities – including offering advice on the development of the theory of change and advocacy strategy, and supporting through consultation and review of the country research reports and relevant outputs;
- To support the dissemination of the project outputs to key audiences and potential users.

The Research Advisory Group will have contributed to the following results (individual contributions may vary):

- A research protocol and tools to map data collection across EU Member States child protection systems;
- An evidence-based advocacy strategy and toolkit;
- Selection of key stakeholders at national and sub-national level to be consulted at the fieldwork phase;
- Review of the country reports, discussion paper and policy brief that together will encompass a final report for the research study;
- Two face-to-face (on-line) consultations that will review the research study's components at the start (March) and towards the end of the project (November). More than two meetings over the year might be proposed due to the current extraordinary circumstances related to Covid-19 crisis.

Working methods and meetings

The work of the Research Advisory Group is based to some extent upon virtual communication and consultation. However, two face-to-face (currently online) meetings are also held to coincide with key milestones along the project's timeline, including presentation of the draft research protocol by the Senior Research Coordinator, and review of the country reports. RAG members are expected to ideally attend these meetings in person if possible (normally 2 meetings).

When feedback and input is required in between meetings, members of the RAG will be expected to provide input via email. From time to time individuals may be asked to provide specific advice and expertise as required.

Meetings of the RAG are convened by Eurochild staff involved in the project. Minutes will be circulated to all members and to those in attendance following each meeting. Minutes and all other documentation are to be considered confidential by members unless expressly indicated otherwise. The Research Advisory Group may propose experts / stakeholders to be invited to attend its meetings where their attendance would facilitate discussion.

Expenditure, travel expenses

Members of the RAG work in an honorary capacity. Members and invited experts / stakeholders are reimbursed for their travel expenses related to the Research Advisory Group meetings.

Members of the Research Advisory Group

Chair: Maria Herczog - Family, Child and Youth Association, Hungary

	Name	Last Name	Organisation
1	Maria	Herczog	Family, Child and Youth Association (Chair)
2	Sérgio Hugo	Costa Araújo	Independent Researcher
3	Lacy	Dicharry	International Foster Care Organisation
4	Donna	Easterlow	Directorate for Education Analytical Services, Scottish Government
5	Aaron	Greenberg	UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO)
6	Judith	Harwin	University of Lancaster
7	Florence	Koenderink	Family Based Solutions
8	Astrid	Podsiadlowski	The European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)
9	Dominic	Richardson	UNICEF Office of Research Innocenti
10	Anja	Teltschik	UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO)
11	Harriet	Ward	University of Oxford