

# Statement on urgency to counter anti-child rights movements in Europe

8 February 2022



During a trilateral meeting European Commission Vice-President Šuica, Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Mijatović and Eurochild President Coleiro-Preca, expressed their **deep concern** about the impacts of the anti-child rights movements on children and civil society. Evidence was provided by Eurochild's President, staff and children from Eurochild members, the **National Network for Children in Bulgaria and the Hungarian Child Rights Coalition**.

**European Commission Vice-President Šuica and Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Mijatović expressed their solidarity** and strong support for children's rights and for Eurochild members and children experiencing threats and attacks when advocating for children's rights.

Attacks on human rights and human rights defenders – including those upholding and defending children's rights – are not new. Eurochild, its members and other children's rights organisations have been voicing concerns about anti-child rights movements in several countries across Europe.[1]



Such movements have **threatened many NGOs and silenced them due to fear of sanctions.**

**Children’s rights activists have been attacked in public and on social media.** In response, mechanisms [2] at EU level, such as ProtectDefenders.eu, which is led by a consortium of human rights organisations and funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, provide protection for human rights defenders at risk for their activities worldwide. However, there are no mechanisms with a specific focus on children’s rights to monitor and counteract anti-child rights movements in Europe, and their harmful rhetoric and actions, despite the growing impact on child human rights defenders.

Vice President Šuica recalled that civil society is vital for a healthy democracy and a society where people can effectively enjoy their rights. She emphasised that **we need a strong and independent civil society to foster an open and pluralist space for debate and citizens’ participation to the democratic life of the EU, and to support victims of fundamental rights violations, especially children.**

In its work to promote and protect the rights of the child and other fundamental rights, the Commission provides **financial support to civil society organisations** and addresses challenges that civil society faces through its work to safeguard the rule of law and democracy in Europe. Vice President Šuica is open to exploring existing EU mechanisms and their potential to **help monitor anti-child rights movements** and their impacts on children.

*“Children are full rights holders. The growing trend of depicting children’s rights as contrary to family values and parents’ rights is alarming. Such anti-child rights initiatives become especially dangerous when politicians take advantage of them and transform them into laws and policies that weaken children’s rights under the pretext of preserving tradition and moral standards”,* said Human Rights Commissioner Mijatović.

**Eurochild’s President Marie-Louise Coleiro-Preca is calling for European current mechanisms to be expanded to monitor and counteract anti-child rights discourse.** Such an action will require dedicated capacity, expertise, and financial resources. However, this can contribute to collaboration between European institutions and UN human rights bodies to counteract misinformation and attacks from anti-child rights movements and promote the sharing of information and expertise. Networks such as Eurochild and its member organisations can provide expertise to support such a mechanism.

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[1] CIVICUS (2019) [‘Anti-child rights groups are making up stories to convince the public’](#)

[2] For example: [The Observatory for the Universality of Rights \(OURS\)](#) coordinated by the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID); [The European Women’s Lobby Observatory on Violence against Women](#)

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