

**Eurochild welcomes the
Commission
Recommendation on
developing and
strengthening integrated
child protection systems in
the best interests of the child**



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

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Eurochild network welcomes the European Commission Recommendation to develop and strengthen integrated child protection systems, and looks forward to supporting its implementation and monitoring.

On the 23rd of April 2024, the European Commission adopted [the Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child](#), as a commitment within the [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#).

This initiative, supporting Member States in strengthening their child protection systems, also marks the first time children's voices have been sought in the preparation of a Commission Recommendation. A comprehensive consultation process has been undertaken, including a call for evidence, and meetings held under the EU Network for Children's Rights, of which Eurochild is part. The Recommendation was also based on a [mapping conducted by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency](#).

Eurochild strongly supports the Commission Recommendation, and is pleased that our numerous suggestions have been integrated into the text.

The Recommendation puts children at the centre of the protection systems. The Commission urges Member States to recognise children as rights-holders and prioritise their best interests in all decision-making processes concerning them. This includes facilitating meaningful participation for children, tailored to their age and maturity, and raising awareness about their rights among various stakeholders. Additionally, special attention must be given to tackling discrimination and addressing the needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups of children, such as those with disabilities or facing specific risks of violence, including by making use of the European Child Guarantee.

Member States are also recommended to ensure safe spaces for children, both offline and online, and empower them to navigate digital environments safely. Furthermore, comprehensive support for children's physical and mental health, including preventive measures and timely access to healthcare services, is essential. Member States are invited to foster a safe and inclusive environment in education, including early childhood education and care, and develop specific anti-bullying plans.

The Recommendation calls for establishing a general framework for integrated child protection systems, which is crucial for ensuring consistency and effectiveness across Member States. This involves developing national plans to prevent and combat violence against children, including trafficking, strengthening coordination mechanisms between relevant sectors, and allocating adequate resources to child protection services. The Commission emphasises the need for systematic, accessible, comparable, and disaggregated data collection mechanisms to ensure an appropriate monitoring of child protection systems. It also provides a detailed overview of EU funding for the recommended measures.

Ensuring continuity of comprehensive and coordinated services is crucial for meeting the diverse needs of all children, such as those affected by domestic violence. The Commission calls for establishing well-publicised reporting mechanisms and integrated case management to ensure timely support for all child victims. Member States are recommended to ban corporal punishment in all settings. Additionally, the Commission calls for a transition towards high-

quality family and community-based care and investment in non-residential services, emphasising that poverty should never be the sole reason for placing children in alternative care.

The Recommendation encourages States to ensure child-friendly justice systems and emphasises the importance of protecting children on the move, including through a best interest assessment and dedicated support services. Moreover, it calls on Member States to prioritise children's rights in the EU external action and protect children from the impact of climate change.

We are pleased to see the focus on the new challenges posed by artificial intelligence, virtual worlds, overexposure to digital content, digital threats, aggressive marketing and cyberbullying. The reference to the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Kids Plus (BIK+) and other related EU legislation is greatly appreciated. **To build on these positive steps, it would be beneficial to provide additional guidance to Member States on recognising the key links between online and offline harm.** Connecting the work of hotlines with broader child protection systems and recommending streamlined referral mechanisms can help direct children to the appropriate services when dealing with online harm. Encouraging Member States to provide targeted training to child protection practitioners to ensure they are well-equipped to address online harm and its impact on children's overall wellbeing and mental health is equally important.

The Commission also adopted a **staff working document**, analysing gaps, challenges, existing EU support, good practices, and recommendations arising from consultations with children, members of the public, stakeholders, international and civil society organisations, as well as Member States and regional authorities. **The document extensively recognises Eurochild's contribution, which is referenced 32 times.**

Eurochild looks forward to supporting the implementation of these guidelines at the national level and working towards building inclusive and effective child protection systems for children, both offline and online. We also eagerly await the opportunity to assist the Commission in monitoring these efforts.

Relevant links

- [Communication Putting children's interests first: a Communication accompanying the Commission Recommendation on integrated child protection systems](#)
- [Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child](#)
- [Annex to the Communication on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child](#)
- [Staff working document](#)
- [Delivering on the EU strategy on the rights of the child - Factsheet](#)
- [Outcome of the consultation with children](#)
- [Outcome of the consultation on the Have your Say portal](#)

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