

Using children's rights to recover from the Global Pandemic: The closing conference for the Building Children's Futures project

Speakers Programme

- **Mieke Schuurman, Director of Children's Rights and Capacity Building, Eurochild**



Mieke Schuurman is a prominent advocate for child rights, serving as Director of Child Rights and Capacity Building at [Eurochild](#), a leading network of organisations and individuals working to promote children's rights and well-being in Europe. Mieke's role oversees Eurochild's key priorities in respect of children's rights, including in the digital environment. She maintains and strengthens existing relationships with key international and European child rights institutions, including the Council of Europe and the UN.

- **Her Excellency Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Eurochild and President of Malta Foundation of Wellbeing in Society MFWS, and former President of Malta**



Her Excellency Marie Louise Coleiro Preca was President of Malta between 2014 and 2019. Marie Louise served in politics for 45 years and was a Member of Parliament for 16 years. She was the very first elected female General Secretary of one of the two main political parties in Malta. She also served at the Council of Europe. As Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, she initiated numerous social reforms. Marie Louise founded and chairs The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, The Malta Trust Foundation, The Emanuele Cancer Research Foundation Malta, and Fondazzjoni Nazareth. She is President of Eurochild and the Mediterranean Children's Movement.

- **Rayaa, Eurochild Children Council and Building Children's Futures Child and Youth Advisory Group (CYPAG)**



Rayaa is 17 years old and is Nigerian-Irish. She is a Child's Rights Ambassador, and an outgoing member of the Eurochild Children's Council. She has been part of the Children and Young People's Advisory Group for the 'Building Children's Futures' project since autumn 2022, for which she co-designed research into the cumulative impact of Covid-19 on youth. She has also been involved with youth organisations such as Foróige, *Comhairle na nÓg* and the Children's Rights Alliance in Ireland. This summer she has received a scholarship to study at Yale in Politics, Law and Economics under the Yale Young Global Scholars Programme.



- **Dr Danielle Kennan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the University of Galway**



Dr. Danielle Kennan is an Assistant Professor in Applied Social Science in the School of Political Science and Sociology at University of Galway, Ireland and a Senior Researcher with the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre. Danielle has an inter-disciplinary expertise in human rights law and the sociology of childhood and youth. Her research interests are in children’s rights, particularly child and youth participation rights. She has published widely in this field and is co-editor of the book *Child and Youth Participation in Policy, Practice and Research*.

- **Karla Charles, EU Programmes and Know Your Rights Project Manager, Children’s Rights Alliance**



Karla joined the Children’s Rights Alliance in October 2022 as the EU Programmes and Know Your Rights Project Manager, and has worked in the children’s rights and human rights sector for over 15 years. She completed her graduate studies at Trinity College and postgraduate studies at the King’s Inns. She has previously worked as Policy Manager for EPIC, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, the Ombudsman for Children’s Office, the EU FRA, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, the Children’s Commissioner for England, amongst others. She is passionate about rights focused policy and equality, loves the sea and mountains, and plays the violin.

- **Linda O’Sullivan, Child Rights Policy Unit, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth, Government of Ireland**



Linda O’Sullivan is responsible for implementation of the Enabling Environment actions of *Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023–2028*, including the development and implementation of Child Rights Impact Assessments. She is a member of the Council of Europe Committee on the Rights of the Child and on the EU Network of Children’s Rights. Linda was previously the Manager of *Hub na nÓg*, Ireland’s centre of excellence and co-ordination of children and young people’s participation in decision-making. She has a Doctorate in Education from Trinity College Dublin.



- **Marie-Cécile Rouillon, Coordinator on the Rights of the Child for the European Commission**



Marie-Cécile Rouillon has been the European Commission's Coordinator for the Rights of the Child, in the Directorate-General for justice and consumers, since March 2022. She is responsible for the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Rights of the Child and for mainstreaming children's right across EU policies. She is closely liaising with children's rights civil society organisations and stakeholders. Since she joined the European Commission in 2006, she has worked on challenging files, in the areas of Home Affairs and Migration, Employment & Social inclusion, Research & Innovation, as well as Education and Culture.

- **Julie Ahern, Director of Legal, Policy and Services, Children's Rights Alliance Ireland**



Julie joined the Children's Rights Alliance in September 2013 and is Legal, Policy and Services Director. Before this she worked in various roles across the Alliance and led the establishment of the Access to Justice Initiative and projects such as the annual Report Card and the Children's Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Before joining the Alliance she worked on the children's rights referendum campaign with the ISPPC and NASC. Julie is a qualified barrister since 2018.

- **Colma Nic Lughadha, National Co-ordinator for Children and Young People's Services Committees, Tusla Child and Family Agency in Ireland**



Colma Nic Lughadha is National Co-ordinator for Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) at Tusla Child and Family Agency in Ireland. In this role, Colma leads implementation of CYPSC - a Department of Children inter-agency initiative comprising of a network of 27 county-level committees supporting multi-agency collaborative working across services for children, young people, and families. Prior to joining Tusla, Colma worked in the community and voluntary sector for over 20 years across Local and Community Development, Education Access, Youth Work and Health Promotion, mainly supporting under-resourced communities.



- **Professor Cath Larkins, University of Central Lancashire**



Cath Larkins is Professor of Childhood Studies at the University of Central Lancashire, Co-Director of The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation and Co-Director of the Social Care Rapid Evaluation Team (Socrates). She innovates in participation, research and knowledge exchange with children and young people, and their allies, across the UK and Europe. She writes about theories and methodologies for participation and citizenship. Her collaborative work with children and young people has led to impact on policy and practice internationally.

- **Professor Bruce Adamson, University of Glasgow, and former Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland**



A human rights lawyer with over 20 years of experience, Bruce has worked as an international expert for the UN, Council of Europe, EU, OSCE and during the pandemic he advised the WHO on children's rights. Bruce was the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland from 2017-2023, playing a leading role in the incorporation of the UNCRC, as well as the laws to raise the age of criminal responsibility and to provide comprehensive protection from physical punishment. His office developed the first Independent Children's Rights Impact Assessment on the response to Covid. He is the current Vice-Chair of the Child Friendly Governance Project and is Professor in Practice at the University of Glasgow School of Law.

- **Véronique Lerch, Independent Human Rights Consultant**



Véronique Lerch is an independent human rights consultant, always curious about new ways to bring change. She is specialised in child rights and has extensive experience in strategy, policy development, capacity-building, advocacy, communication and management. Véronique co-authored European Network of Ombudspersons and UNICEF's landmark report *State measures on children's rights during the Covid-19 pandemic: Multi-country impact assessment: Synthesis report*.

