

Eurochild's reaction to the election of the new College of Commissioners



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

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Eurochild welcomes the election of the new College of Commissioners and expresses its commitment to collaborating with them to ensure children's rights are at the heart of EU policies. We take this opportunity to spotlight several key commitments made by the new Commission that hold particular significance for advancing children's rights.

On 17 September, the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced her team of 26 potential commissioners—one from each European Union member state, excluding the President herself. Following this announcement, each commissioner-designate underwent a thorough vetting process, beginning with an assessment by the European Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs. To assess whether the nominees possessed the necessary competencies and suitability to manage their portfolios, the European Parliament addressed both written questions and oral hearings.

Eurochild engaged with the European Parliament throughout this process, working alongside allies in the **Child Rights Action Group (CRAG)**, the **Alliance for Investing in Children** and **ECLAG**. We are pleased that many of the questions we proposed—focusing on issues relevant to children's rights—were asked in both oral and written forms.

Today, 27 November, the European Parliament, in plenary, approved the College of Commissioners proposed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. As the new Commission officially begins its term on 1 December, Eurochild welcomes the opportunity to reflect on some of the priorities outlined by the commissioners during their hearings.

Roxana Mînzatu, Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness

Executive Vice-President Mînzatu, responsible for portfolios relating to skills, education, and social rights, will lead the work on the **European Pillar of Social Rights' new Action Plan**. She has committed to reducing poverty by 15 million people—including 5 million children—using tools like the upcoming **EU Anti-Poverty Strategy**. Her agenda emphasises social inclusion, addressing inequality, and promoting early childhood and long-term care within a strengthened European Care Strategy framework. She also aims to **strengthen the European Child Guarantee** by closing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers, guiding Member States in the preparation of the 2026 progress reports. Mînzatu's plans include embedding digital skills into curricula and integrating gender equality into the care sector. She also committed to fostering a just transition that balances climate, social, and economic goals, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Glenn Micallef, Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport

Commissioner Micallef aims to enhance youth participation in democratic processes and mainstream youth perspectives in EU policymaking. He plans to introduce a **"youth check"** by 2025 and establish a **youth advisory board** to conduct youth dialogues. Micallef will also oversee the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, and will introduce the first **EU Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness**. His commitment to children's online safety includes a **four-pillar strategy to combat cyberbullying**, that will be built on a common definition, research into best practices, cooperation with civil society organisations, and fostering a culture of seeking advice and reporting incidents. He seeks to ensure that children's views are reflected in policymaking, particularly in areas like mental health, education, and environmental rights.

Magnus Brunner, Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration

Commissioner Brunner, tasked with implementing the **Pact on Migration and Asylum** and developing a **European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy**, emphasises the importance of gender and youth mainstreaming in migration policies. His focus on refugee children includes ensuring access to education, healthcare, and protection from trafficking and abuse. He supports adopting new regulations to combat child sexual abuse with the **revision of Directive 2011/93/EU** on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse material (recast).

Brunner stated that he will work towards the conclusion of the negotiations for the **Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse** before the expiration of the transitional regulation in April 2026. While we applaud his preference for a balance between high standards of child protection and respect for users' privacy, we must highlight that children's rights are not second-class. As Europe faces a Child Sexual Abuse Crisis, exacerbated by digital technologies, the Commissioner must take a stronger stand for strong laws that allow and mandate online platforms to detect, remove and report CSAM online.

Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy

Executive Vice-President Virkkunen showed a strong commitment to prioritise children's rights in the implementation of the **Digital Services Act**, committing to doubling the Commission's resources for DSA enforcement. Despite not explicitly committing to exploring minimum standards of age verification, we trust the Commission will carry out this work under the DSA enforcement, avoiding fragmented approaches among Member States. She will also enquire on how social media affects the lives of citizens, particularly children, and will firmly call on all market players to take responsibility and ensure that the online world for minors is safe and helpful, rather than harmful. She has also pledged to address **addictive online designs and commercial practices** that exploit the vulnerabilities of children and undermine children's rights, which we hope to see extended to video games that remain largely unregulated.

Michael McGrath, Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, and the Rule of Law

Commissioner McGrath's priorities include implementing the **European Media Freedom Act** and upholding the Charter of Fundamental Rights, including establishing a **Civil Society Platform**. McGrath reaffirmed the EU's commitment to ensuring equality across all EU actions. He committed to maintaining high standards in the negotiations around the revision of **Directive 2012/29/EU** on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, ensuring the implementation of **Directive (EU) 2024/1385** on combating violence against women and domestic violence. He also referenced the **Digital Fairness Act** as a tool to address potential harms, prevent consumers from exploitation and make sure that influencers are not misleading them and that children are protected.

Hadja Lahbib, Commissioner for Crisis Preparedness and Equality

Commissioner Lahbib is committed to boosting efforts in **humanitarian diplomacy** to promote respect for international law and humanitarian principles, safeguard humanitarian space, protect critical infrastructure and civilians—including humanitarian and health workers—and advance work on the **Climate Adaptation Plan**.

She will prioritise advancing equality and combating discrimination within the EU, including through the implementation of the **Equal Treatment Directive** to address gaps in laws related to religion, disability, age, and sexual orientation. Lahbib is dedicated to strengthening measures against gender-based violence, particularly focusing on consent. She supports the full implementation of the **Istanbul Convention** on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Lahbib aims to renew the **LGBTIQ Equality Strategy** and the **Anti-Racism Strategy** and support the implementation of the **Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, including a focus on deinstitutionalisation. She will also focus on addressing the "**motherhood penalty**" in earnings by supporting work-life balance policies. Her commitment extends to promoting deinstitutionalisation and improving care services for people with disabilities.

Marta Kos, Commissioner for Enlargement

As Commissioner Kos highlighted, democracy thrives not only in parliaments and courts but also within communities, homes, and the hearts of citizens. **Increased funding for civil society and the media** is anticipated to strengthen these pillars of democracy for the countries aspiring to join the European Union. **The Annual Enlargement Package** will remain the key instrument for assessing the reform to ensure alignment with EU standards.

Raffaele Fitto, Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms

Executive Vice-President Fitto underscores the importance of linking **EU funds to reforms**, an approach that has proven effective under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. He emphasises ensuring compliance with EU values, particularly the rule of law, in implementing EU budgets. His vision for Cohesion Policy includes **reducing regional disparities** and enhancing access to public services, education, jobs, and digital connectivity, especially for regions trailing in green and digital transitions. Energy poverty, housing renovations, and disability rights are central to his cohesion agenda. He aims to enhance

social services and housing affordability by utilising EU funds to foster social inclusion and resilience. Fitto will also contribute to the European Affordable Housing Plan.

Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare

Commissioner Várhelyi has declared a strong focus on children's mental health, emphasising the continuation of the 2023 Mental Health initiatives, with particular attention to children and young people. He highlights the ongoing need to protect children from nicotine addiction through evaluations of tobacco and electronic cigarette use. Várhelyi will lead an **EU-wide inquiry into the broader impacts of social media on well-being**, initiating an evidence-based debate on this critical issue.

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner for Energy and Housing

Commissioner Jørgensen's work will address **energy poverty** while ensuring a socially just and competitive transition. With millions of families struggling to find affordable housing, Jørgensen stresses the urgency of unlocking public and private investment for affordable and sustainable housing. He will develop the first-ever **European Affordable Housing Plan** and a **European Strategy for Housing Construction**. His key priorities include reducing building costs, enhancing the skills of the labour force, raising productivity, and improving the environmental performance of construction. He will collaborate with the European Investment Bank to establish a pan-European investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing.

Jozef Síkela, Commissioner for Partnership

Commissioner Síkela will ensure the role of the Global Gateway in supporting global connectivity and investment through 2027 and beyond in the EU's partner countries. He will continue building on the **Team Europe approach** by aligning strategies and mobilising resources from Member States, public development banks, and development finance institutions. He will also ensure the EU remains committed to promoting the **United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its **Sustainable Development Goals**. He will continue investing in strengthening **education systems**, early childhood development, girls' education, and effective, resilient, and accessible health systems. Tackling inequalities and promoting gender equality will also remain central priorities.

As Europe navigates a year of political change amidst ongoing challenges, the 2024 EU elections and the formation of the new European Commission offer a unique chance to prioritise children's rights. While some progress has been made, significant gaps remain in addressing critical issues such as climate change, child protection, mental health, digital safety and child poverty. Eurochild stands ready to collaborate with the European Commission, bringing the expertise of our members and the voices of children to the forefront. We look forward to engaging with the new commissioners and contributing to focused discussions on the Commission's plan to ensure children's rights are at the heart of EU policies.

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