

Eurochild's initial contribution to the Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

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As the largest network of organisations and individuals working with and for children in Europe, Eurochild welcomes the European Commission's initiative to develop a Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness to *"map out how we can strengthen communication between generations and ensure that the interests of present and future generations are respected throughout our policy and law-making."*

This initiative must maintain a strong focus on children's rights. Children are among those paying the highest price for policymakers' decisions—or inaction. At the same time, they are increasingly contributing to the pursuit of intergenerational fairness, with a specific focus on future generations¹.

While we reiterate our ongoing support to Glenn Micallef, Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, in this crucial work, including by sharing insights from our members on the ground, we would like to highlight key points that should be integrated into the strategy from a child rights perspective.

1. Embedding a Child Rights Impact Assessment in all decisions impacting children

While children have the same rights as all human beings, they are also entitled to specific rights that acknowledge their unique needs and experiences. The decisions made today have a profound impact on their lives and those of future generations. A **Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA)** is a systematic process for evaluating the potential effects of proposed laws, policies, budget decisions, or programmes on children. Its goal is to ensure that these initiatives respect, protect, and fulfil children's rights. **CRIA should be embedded in all decision-making processes at the national, EU, and local levels**, helping to identify both positive and negative impacts and make the necessary adjustments to uphold children's rights.

2. Ensure child participation to address societal issues

Engaging children in decision-making processes is not only a matter of children's rights, but it is also beneficial for decision-makers, as they have unique perspectives and innovative ideas. Recognising children's participatory rights requires a fundamental shift - from viewing them as passive recipients of protection to acknowledging them as rights holders and active contributors to decisions that affect their lives. Ensuring meaningful, safe, and rights-based participation requires fostering partnerships where children and adults collaborate and learn from one another. Special attention must be given to reaching out to vulnerable, marginalised, and younger children, recognising their unique needs and perspectives.

¹ Future generations refer to children who are yet to be born and will live in the years to come.

3. Tackling the anti-rights movements

Intergenerational fairness requires decisive action to uphold universal human rights and safeguard civil society's role in holding governments accountable. Measures should be taken to address the shrinking space for civil society and the unprecedented backlash against universal human rights, threatening the freedom, safety, and work of human rights defenders. While children's rights are not always recognised as part of the broader assault on fundamental rights, children – especially racialised children, LGBTIQ children, victims of violence, and those living in poverty - are the most affected.

Eurochild's members report a growing wave of opposition to children's rights, often masked under slogans of "family protection" and "traditional values." These movements undermine children's status as rights holders and obstruct progress on key legislation, including laws addressing corporal punishment, sexual rights, and domestic violence. Alarmingly, children's rights are being manipulated for political purposes, and in many countries, children leading efforts for human rights and social change are met with repression. Civil society organisations that advocate for change and play a key role in promoting intergenerational fairness also face increasing hostility. Since 2022, Eurochild has been calling for the introduction of a monitoring mechanism to monitor these attacks, sound the alarm, and offer a safe space for defenders to share their experiences and propose solutions.

4. Breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and social exclusion

One of the most significant barriers to tackling intergenerational poverty is the **lack of adequate funding for children's well-being**. Far too often, financial resources are not allocated to initiatives supporting children despite their critical role in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Intervening and addressing vulnerabilities as early as possible is not only a human rights imperative but also a financially sound solution. This should be integrated into the discussions linked to the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The European Child Guarantee should be strengthened to ensure key services, such as housing, education, early childhood education and care, and nutrition, reach those in need, including in remote areas.

Addressing child poverty necessitates a holistic, cross-sector approach. Labour market policies should be improved to ensure access to quality jobs and fair wages. Adequate family benefits must be provided, and essential services outlined in the Child Guarantee must be readily accessible. Tackling inequalities must be a core priority, integrated across all sectors. **Cuts to the social sector, especially for services benefiting children, must be avoided at all costs.**

5. Finding solutions to the intergenerational cycle of violence

The ambiguity surrounding violence against children, the lack of definitions, and a culture of impunity have led to inadequate responses for generations, failing to adequately support those affected and contributing to intergenerational cycles where children who experience violence are more likely to perpetuate it or be victimised later in life.

Policymakers and all actors supporting children must adopt a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of violence, in line with the EU Recommendation on Integrated Child Protection Systems. This includes child-specific types of violence, such as corporal punishment, and ensures that systems are trauma-sensitive, providing support child victims and prevent secondary victimisation.

Investing in trauma-informed approaches and providing early intervention is crucial for breaking this cycle. By addressing the root causes of violence and offering the necessary support, it is possible to improve mental health outcomes and help build a more peaceful, safe and just society.

6. Ensuring children's environmental rights

Children today face the effects of climate change and environmental degradation on a much larger scale than previous generations. Despite contributing little to the causes of climate change, they will bear the brunt of its long-term consequences. This makes the protection of their rights a matter of **intergenerational fairness**. Children living in vulnerable situations, particularly in the Global South, are disproportionately affected by environmental challenges despite their minimal contribution to emissions. Therefore, upholding children's environmental rights is inherently tied to advancing **social justice and addressing historical inequalities**.

It is necessary to tackle environmental inequalities affecting vulnerable groups and enhance environmental education. Investments in sustainable development, building resilience and ensuring financial support for marginalised communities are also crucial. A focus should be given to providing clean water, sanitation, green space access, and addressing environmental damage in disadvantaged areas.

7. The role of education, including human rights education

Education is one of the most powerful tools for ensuring intergenerational fairness. Children today must have access to quality education that equips them with the skills needed for a rapidly changing world. Schools play a crucial role in empowering children to promote human rights. While direct teaching and learning content should include rights-related material, making rights an explicit subject of learning, **all subjects should be guided by a rights-based approach**.

Access to quality education is not only a child's right. It also helps ensure that future generations will be better equipped to face global challenges such as climate change, economic inequality, and technological shifts, creating a more sustainable and equitable world for everyone.

Education plays a key role in promoting inclusion, particularly for marginalised groups. **Focusing on the first 1,000 days of a child's life ensures that all children, regardless of their background or circumstances, receive the support they need to succeed.** This is foundational to intergenerational fairness because it allows future generations to lift themselves out of poverty, inherit a more equal and inclusive society.

8. Breaking the intergenerational cycle of trauma from child separation

Child separation can cause deep emotional and psychological trauma, often leading to intergenerational effects, where children who have been separated may struggle with parenting later in life. Separation must be a last resort and only if it is in the best interest of the child. Institutional care lacks the nurturing environment children need, while family-based care provides more support and stability. Investing in high-quality alternative care, along with empowering caregivers with parenting skills, helps break the cycle of trauma and offers children a chance to grow in safe, loving environments that uphold their rights and well-being.

9. Ensuring online safety for all generations

Enhancing safety measures for children to ensure they are not exposed to harmful content is paramount. As risks evolve and become more complex—such as persuasive design techniques and online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA)—children's safety, privacy, and mental and physical well-being are increasingly at risk. To address these challenges, online child safety requires a more comprehensive approach that combines traditional awareness-raising, parental responsibility, and the accountability of online platforms to uphold children's rights. This is central to achieving intergenerational fairness, as it ensures that children grow up in an environment where their rights are respected, enabling them to contribute to a safer and more equitable society.

Relevant sources

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