

Eurochild's 2026 Conference “Social Protection Systems”

Concept Note and Programme Outline

Eurochild's 2026 conference on “Social Protection Systems” will take place on 16-17 June in Paphos, Cyprus. It will be co-organised by the Pancyrian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children (PCCPWC) and hosted by the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU).

Strong child protection systems are essential to uphold children’s rights and ensure their safety, dignity, and development. Yet across Europe, gaps in implementation, chronic underfunding, and fragmented services continue to put children at risk of violence, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination.

Evidence shows the consequences are severe:

- Children continue to experience domestic and peer violence, corporal punishment, or exploitation.
- Preventive services are underdeveloped, and families often lack support before crisis occurs.
- Marginalised groups, including children with disabilities, those from minority backgrounds, and children on the move, face persistent barriers in accessing protection.
- Understaffing, staff turnover, and weak coordination across sectors such as justice, health, and education further undermine a protective response.
- Access to justice is often not child-friendly, leaving many without adequate legal representation or the opportunity to be heard.

Every child must be protected from all forms of harm and treated with dignity, without discrimination. Our work is rooted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) and in the conviction that child protection must be rights-based, inclusive, and centered on the best interests and voices of children.

The EU has a crucial role to play. The [2024 Commission Recommendation on integrated child protection systems](#), together with the European Child Guarantee, provide a strong framework for reform. These instruments highlight prevention, family- and community-based care, cross-sectoral coordination, and equal access to services as key priorities. They guide Member States in aligning national reforms with the best interests of the child.

Eurochild calls on governments and EU institutions to:

- Ensure laws and strategies are fully implemented, with adequate funding and monitoring;
- Prioritise investment in prevention and family support to avoid unnecessary separation and new entries in child protection system and alternative care;
- Advance the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care;
- Eliminate discrimination and guarantee equal access to protection services;
- Develop child-friendly justice systems where children’s voices are heard and respected.

Conference objectives

- **Policy impact:** Contribute with strong, evidence-based inputs to EU policy debates on advancing children's rights and strengthening integrated child protection systems.
- **Knowledge exchange:** Facilitate sharing of inspiring policies, practices and research related to advancing children's rights across Europe.
- **Amplifying voices:** Ensure children and the organisations supporting them are actively heard and contribute to a truly inclusive dialogue.
- **Collaborative engagement:** Foster networking and exchange among civil society, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers across Europe.

Participants / target audience

We aim to attract up to 150 participants, including children and young people, representatives from local authorities, national and international policy makers, academics specialised in children's rights and child protection, NGOs working with children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds, and child rights advocates. The conference language is English.

Programme outline

	<i>Tuesday 16 June 2026</i>		<i>Wednesday 17 June 2026</i>
9h00-10h00	Registrations	9h00-11h00	Human library
10h00-11h00	Conference opening		A unique experience of "reading" stories based on experiences of children and adults. The "books" will feature inspiring stories from conference participants - decision-makers, civil society leaders and active young people. Become a 'book' (speaker) and share your story or experience! The 'readers' (small group of participants) will listen, question and enter into dialogue. The Human library concept will allow participants to discuss the specific themes linked to the conference topic and to enter into small group discussions connected to individual experiences and ideas).
11h00-13h00	Introductory session <i>Co-facilitated by Bruce Adamson (Eurochild Vice-President) and a young person from the Eurochild Children's Council (ECC).</i> Inspiring speeches from young people. Followed by interactive discussions with participants and a Networking exercise.	11h00-11h30 11h30-13h00	Coffee break Interactive parallel workshops Eurochild members will be offered the opportunity to run workshops and profile positive examples linked to the conference theme. <i>At least one Workshop will be run/co-facilitated by children.</i>
13h00-14h00	Lunch	13h00-1400	Lunch

14h00-15h30	<p>Interactive parallel workshops</p> <p>Eurochild members will be offered the opportunity to run workshops and profile positive examples linked to the conference theme.</p> <p><i>At least one Workshop will be run/co-facilitated by children.</i></p> <p>Coffee break</p>	14h00-15h30	<p>Conference closing</p> <p><i>Co-facilitated by Bruce Adamson (Eurochild Vice-President) and a young person from the ECC.</i></p> <p>Plenary session including reflections from invited speakers', interactive discussions with speakers and participants on learning and key messages from the whole conference, followed by closing remarks by co-facilitators).</p>
15h30-16h30			
16h30-18h00	<p>Interactive parallel workshops</p> <p>Eurochild members will be offered the opportunity to run workshops and profile positive examples linked to the conference theme.</p> <p><i>At least one Workshop will be run/co-facilitated by children.</i></p>		
20h00	Conference dinner	16h30-19h00 19h00	"Walk" – sightseeing Conference dinner (tbc)

About the organisers

Organiser: Eurochild

Eurochild is the largest network of organisations and individuals working with and for children in Europe. We are striving for a society where all children and young people grow up happy, healthy, confident and respected as individuals in their own right. We influence policies, build civil society capacity, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. Our work is underpinned by the UN CRC.

Co-organiser: Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Cyprus

The PCCPWC is the National Body coordinating the District Committees for the Protection and Welfare of Children and is a network of 32 national organisations and individuals working for and with children and/or interested in the promotion of child's rights and child well-being as stated in the UN CRC, totalling its outreach capacity to more than forty thousand adults. Via the Cyprus Children's Parliament, that the PCCPWC established and operates since 2000, it can reach school children in all schools, public and private.

The programme is developed in consultation with the [Eurochild Children's Council \(ECC\)](#) and the [Cyprus Children's Parliament \(CCP\)](#).

ECC is a selected group of children supported by Eurochild members from different countries around Europe. They play an advisory role in relation to Eurochild's key advocacy priorities, governance decisions and events.

CCP is a "Child-led" formal group of people under the age of 18, established in 2000 by PCCPWC, along with a group of children that worked from 1997 to draft a Statute and a Regulation for Operations. Its 56 members (equal to adult MPs) are elected for a two year term by the Student Councils of each public and private high school. The CCP's mission is to advocate and press for the implementation of all rights but in particular of participatory rights for all children residing in Cyprus, and influence legislation so that children's rights are taken into account and ensure opportunities for children to live an easier, happier life and develop their full potential.

Timeline and key milestones

- **December** – Promotion and publicity starts. Call for Workshop and Human Library presenters launched.
- **January** – Plenary speakers confirmed. Submission of proposals for Workshops and Human Library.
- **February** – Workshop and Human Library contributors confirmed. First release of detailed conference programme launched. Opening of pre-registrations.
- **March** – Final programme published.
- **April to June** – Promotion, preparation with different contributors.