

Make Children's Rights A Priority!

- 1** Help make the EU a leader in children's rights by 'child rights proofing' all EU policies and actions
- 2** Advocate for children's views to be sought out and listened to in EU decisions and discussions, and for children to be empowered to participate
- 3** Act for sufficient resources to be provided for children's rights in the EU budget
- 4** Support progressive EU measures to combat discrimination against children
- 5** Promote ambitious EU action for the eradication of child poverty and social exclusion in the EU
- 6** Back EU action to protect children against violence, abuse and exploitation
- 7** Ensure that the EU promotes and protects the rights of children subject to immigration control
- 8** Promote the integration of children's interests and needs across EU environment, media and consumer protection policies and legislation, as well as in the fields of health, education and culture
- 9** Call for policies which actively contribute to improving the rights of children in EU accession and candidate countries
- 10** Act to improve the implementation of the EU's external relations tools and instruments for children's rights



Children in the European Union

There are over 100 million children aged 0-18 living in the European Union. Although many of the EU's actions affect children within and outside of the EU, there is still no systematic consideration of how EU actions impact on children. This is despite ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) by all EU Member states. Children are still not fully acknowledged as equal European citizens and there is no coherent EU approach to children's rights.

By using their legislative, budgetary and political powers, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) can help to make children's rights a reality in Europe and beyond.

WE CALL ON CANDIDATE MEPs TO COMMIT TO:



1 Help make the EU a leader in children's rights by 'child-right proofing' all EU policies and actions

Many EU policies and activities affect children, so it is crucial they are 'child rights-proofed' to ensure the impact on children's rights is taken into account. In 2006, the European Commission agreed to develop a children's rights strategy to achieve this aim, but no strategy has yet been adopted. Continued political commitment is needed at the highest level to drive this process forward, and to implement practical measures within the EU institutions based on international best practice. The Lisbon Treaty includes children's rights for the first time in the EU's objectives, and if ratified, will provide a stronger underpinning for children's rights to be taken into consideration.

2 Advocate for children's views to be sought out and listened to in EU decisions and discussions, and for children to be empowered to participate

The UNCRC clearly states that children have a right to have their views taken into account in all decisions affecting them. Consequently, at EU level children should be recognised as active participants in the shaping of policies affecting them.

3 Act for sufficient resources to be provided for children's rights in the EU budget

Current EU funding targeting specific children's issues is limited to a few areas and is disjointed. There is no overall children's rights budget line, or overview of current EU spending on children. Real commitment to children's rights requires the allocation of sufficient resources for children's rights in the EU budget.

4 Support progressive EU measures to combat discrimination against children

Children experience many forms of discrimination due to a disability or their ethnic group, for example. Children are also discriminated against because of their age but this is not yet recognised by the EU's approach to discrimination. The EU's approach to discrimination must be broadened to recognise that children also experience unfair discrimination just because of their age.

5 Promote ambitious EU action for the eradication of child poverty and social exclusion in the EU

Approximately 19 million children live at risk of poverty in the EU. There is broad consensus across national governments that tackling child poverty is a priority, but there is still a failure to take comprehensive and decisive action. The EU must adopt ambitious quantified targets on child poverty reduction, backed by rigorous national commitments and monitoring of child well-being. Member states must be held accountable to their commitments.

6 Back EU action to protect children against violence, abuse and exploitation

EU cooperation is crucial to tackle some aspects of violence and child abuse which have cross-border dimensions - such as child trafficking or online images of child sexual abuse (child pornography). In addition, the EU can support its member states to learn from each other about how to effectively prevent violence against children, and protect children who experience violence. EU cooperation to implement children's right to protection from different forms of violence should be enhanced, adopting a children's rights approach.

7 Ensure that the EU promotes and protects the rights of children subject to immigration control

Across the EU, third country national children who may be without papers to reside in the EU or who are part of an asylum application process are being denied access to their rights. These children, whether separated or accompanied by their families, must be treated as children first and foremost and benefit from the full range of rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

8 Promote the integration of children's interests and needs across EU environment, media and consumer protection policies and legislation, as well as in the fields of health, education and culture

The EU plays a key role in adopting standards on areas such as the environment, media and consumer protection. Children are generally more vulnerable to the effects of environmental problems than adults, and they are a significant consumer group of goods and services. However, their needs and rights are rarely taken into consideration in the development of EU policies and legislation on these issues. The interests and rights of children must be systematically considered in all policies affecting them.

9 Call for policies which actively contribute to improving the rights of children in EU accession and candidate countries

Accession negotiations with countries wishing to join the EU can help bring about significant reforms in the countries concerned, including around children's rights. So far, however, improving children's access to their rights in those countries is not made an explicit condition of accession. Children's rights must be made clearly visible within the EU's enlargement process, including making them a condition for accession.

10 Act to improve the implementation of the EU's external relations tools and instruments for children's rights

The EU has some tools and instruments which it can use to protect and promote children's rights in partner countries. However, their implementation is lacking and rights usually lose out to other interests, such as trade, security or energy. This lack of consistency between word and deed diminishes the EU's credibility on the world stage. The EU needs to further improve the implementation of its children's rights and human rights policies in Brussels, in partner countries and in international fora such as the UN.



WHAT CAN MEPs DO?

MEPs can for example:

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- **Help improve coordination between European Parliament Committees and Political Groups** on children's rights issues, for example by supporting the establishment of an Intergroup on children's rights or other appropriate mechanisms.
 - **Raise children's rights issues in Committees and Political Groups**, and make sure that children's rights are considered in debates, reports and decisions so that proposals that ignore or have a negative impact on the realisation of children's rights are rejected and/or revised.
 - **Ask questions on children's rights issues to Commissioners and Presidency representatives** when they visit the Committees, including during the Hearings for the new European Commissioners.
 - **Ensure the allocation of sufficient resources for children's rights in the EU budget.**
 - **Table Written and Oral Questions** to the Commission and Council on children's rights issues.
 - **Talk to children and young people** as well as children's organisations in your constituency to find out which issues are important to them.
 - **Work with the European Children's Network and Eurochild** to implement the commitments in this Manifesto. We can provide information and suggest useful actions.

The European Children's Network (EURONET) is a coalition of networks and organisations campaigning for children's rights, as defined in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It has been working for over 15 years to promote greater visibility of children's rights within EU policy-making and legislation. EURONET members include 36 children's rights NGOs representing 24 of the EU's 27 Member states, as well as a number of trans-European alliances.

Website : www.europeanchildrensnetwork.org

Eurochild is an international network of organisations working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people. Eurochild's work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We are funded by the European Commission under the PROGRESS Programme, the Community programme for employment and social solidarity. Eurochild's main focus is promoting child well-being and tackling child poverty and social exclusion. **Website :** www.eurochild.org

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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Note: Not all organisations in each network have expertise in all areas covered by the manifesto.

