

Joint Statement

More than idle words: time for EU Member States to commit to the rights of all children in and outside the EU!

15 October 2021

Children in the EU and the world need and deserve a strong political commitment to uphold and protect their rights. Following the launch of the ambitious EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child by the European Commission, child rights advocates express their deep disappointment and alarm at Member States' recent failure to reach agreement on a set of Council Conclusions.

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, one of the key flagship initiatives aiming at ensuring all children in and outside the EU have equal rights and opportunities, has been warmly welcomed by children's rights advocates. The meaningful involvement of children and young people and civil society organisations in the design of the strategy is a particularly encouraging precedent.

It is therefore deeply regrettable that European Member States have failed, on 7 October 2021, to adopt Council Conclusions in support of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, in spite of their international and EU obligations to uphold children's rights¹. In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), the EU treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, to which all EU Member States are bound, all children are entitled to the protection of their rights without reservation or any form of discrimination.

This comes at a time when so many children are exposed to the primary and secondary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and we witness an alarming rise in child poverty, violence, exploitation and abuse. The gap in access to essential services such as education, healthcare, housing, food and social protection has been widening within Europe and globally. In this global context, it is not only disheartening, but utterly incomprehensible that EU Member States are unable to unanimously agree to putting children's rights at the heart of EU action.

We cannot accept that children in the EU and across the world are left hostages to political infighting. We urgently call on the Council of the EU to express a **strong and clear commitment to the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**. In light of all EU Member States' commitments and obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, we call on them **to comprehensively implement the Strategy** in national policies and practices and to champion the rights of all children, both within the EU and in external action.

¹ All 27 EU Member States are signatories of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

This Statement has been endorsed by:

- Hope and Homes for Children
- Lumos
- Eurochild
- SOS Children's Villages
- Save the Children
- Children of Prisoners Europe
- Missing Children Europe
- Plan International
- IMF-SEI
- COFACE Families Europe
- Alliance For Childhood
- European Network on Statelessness
- Terre des Hommes
- Defence for Children International
- PICUM
- World Vision
- Learning for Well-being Foundation
- European Anti-Poverty Network

