



**6** ASKS  
FOR THE FULFILMENT  
OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS  
WORLDWIDE





The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) entered into force on 20 November 1989 and became the most ratified convention globally, supported by 196 countries.

The European Union, in the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights makes the **promotion and protection of children's rights its explicit objectives**, requiring the best interest of the child be a primary consideration in all EU actions.

The EU and its Member States also made a strong commitment to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 which represents a powerful opportunity to accelerate progress for children.

In the past 30 years a shift has started in how children and childhood are perceived. Children today are healthier, better nourished, more educated and more protected by law than at any point in human history. Still, the UNCRC is not fully implemented, recognized or widely understood across the globe and children continue to face substantial challenges worldwide.

*If [people] really want a bright future for the world then they need to treat children with special care, they need to respect children, and they need to respect the rights of children too.*

*(Sarifina, Ghana)*

There is a pressing need to refresh the relevance and urgency around implementing the UNCRC for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Global trends, like digital technologies, environmental change, protracted conflict, increased forced displacement, statelessness and growing inequalities, along with harmful practices, such as institutionalisation and violence against children, are and will be impacting children's lives. Today's children face new threats to their rights while new opportunities arise to better realise their rights. In 2019, we must look ahead to the future of childhood and promise to fulfil the rights of every child, now, and in future generations for the benefit of society as a whole.

According to the UNCRC Article 12, children have the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. The participation of children is essential - both morally and legally.



On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, international and European child rights networks and organisations working to protect and promote children's rights in EU policy-making[i] call for **continuing and stepping up efforts to ensure the rights of all children are fulfilled through European policy.**

- 400 million children live in extreme poverty worldwide and 23,7 million are at risk of poverty and exclusion in Europe. That's more than the populations of Belgium, Ireland, and Bulgaria combined.
- More than half the world's children – 1.2 billion – live in countries affected by widespread poverty, conflict, and discrimination.
- Children in fragile countries are among those who will feel the biggest impact from climate change. Yet, European children will also be affected.
- One in ten children worldwide lives without or at risk of losing parental care and millions of children live in institutions which impose serious risks for their development, protection, and wellbeing.

*In the projects developed by decision makers, children and young people should be involved too:*

*when making any decision which affects children and young people, to inform us and consult with us, for real.*

*(Pavel, 17 years)*

We are calling on EU leaders and decision-makers to:

**A. BREAK the cycles of poverty, inequality, violence, and conflict** for future generations by intervening early with comprehensive approaches, and empowering children through education, social services, and strengthened family support, child-care, and child protection systems.



One in four children in the EU is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Whilst universal provision to all children contributes to the well-being of society, targeted support to those children most in need is necessary in every EU Member State. It is vital to take a rights-based approach, and acknowledge every child first and foremost as a child, regardless of their residence status, nationality status or any other status.

1



Children worldwide are twice as likely as adults to live in extreme poverty. They account for half of all people who remain extremely poor. Globally, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2–17 years, have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in the past year. The EU should support comprehensive child protection systems in partner countries and reach the most left-behind.

2

**B. INVEST in children inside and outside Europe: it is the best way to break the cycles of poverty, inequality, and conflict, and to improve society as a whole.** Healthy, educated, protected, and resilient children, growing up in protecting and loving family and community-based care, build more prosperous, sustainable, stable, equal, and safe societies.



The EU has to promote structural policy reforms that benefit children, through its monitoring of progress, political guidance, and EU funds.

3

It must create and implement an ambitious Child Guarantee to politically and financially support governments in helping all children, including the most vulnerable and irrespective of their residence or any other status, to access key services, such as education, healthcare, child protection systems and care, including support for the transition from institutional to quality family and community-based care.



The next EU budget for external action should invest in sectors and actions that can have a positive impact on the lives of children. 20% of the new Neighbourhood, Development and International

4

Cooperation Instrument should be dedicated to investment in areas that help children survive and thrive such as health, education, nutrition, social protection and care.

**C. LISTEN to children's voices, INVOLVE them in every decision and ACT on children's views.** Because children have valuable opinions, are powerful agents of change, are vocal about global challenges such as climate change, online safety, mental health and are affected by all policies, decision-makers should listen to them and ensure meaningful participation. Politicians are accountable to children for the decisions they take that affect them.



Meaningful child participation means creating spaces and procedures that enable them to regularly and safely express their views and receive responses on how their views and suggestions have been taken into account and acted on. The EU should invest in a permanent structured mechanism - such as a Children's Parliament - and more engagement online that ensures children's participation and secures their voices are taken into account during the entire EU policy making process, including accountability to children and young people\* on expenditures.

5



In the world - through its delegations - the EU should develop and implement effective mechanisms to ensure systematic, inclusive, and meaningful consultations of children on EU policies and practices that directly affect them, with efforts to reach the most vulnerable children.

6

\* "young people" here and henceforth is used to designate young people below 18 years of age, which often do not identify themselves as children anymore.

Political exchanges between children and decision-makers require constant nurturing: taking children seriously when they are children means they are more likely to believe in democracy and have a positive relationship with their governments and wider communities as adults.

# WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

NOVEMBER 20



[1]

