

Contribution ID: 5529e251-3cf6-41ea-a2d9-b088e9a80878

Date: 26/11/2020 18:08:57

EU strategy on the rights of the child (2021-2024)

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

Children's rights are the human rights of all those below the age of 18. According to the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child, every child in the world is entitled to the same set of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights – irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities, migration status, sexual orientation or any other status.

The protection of children's rights is an objective of the European Union; a guiding principle for EU institutions' actions, and for the EU Member States. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is the legal basis for the EU action. The Charter applies to the EU institutions and bodies and the Member States when they are implementing EU law. In some areas which relate to children's rights, the EU has the competence to harmonise legislation at national level, while in others it has the power to act through other tools, such as policy coordination, or funding. Several areas of EU action also have an influence, direct or indirect, on the rights of children.

The Covid-19 pandemic, and the measures taken to respond to it, have a significant impact on children's rights.

The European Commission is preparing a new strategy on the rights of the child – and this consultation constitutes a key milestone in its preparation. The strategy will provide the policy framework for EU action on children's rights. It will present the actions (legislative, policy, funding etc.) at EU level that contribute to the protection of the rights of the child, both internally and in its external action.

The strategy will address challenges to children's rights, including in the context of the current Covid-19 pandemic, and ensure synergies with recent and upcoming policy developments. The strategy will include a list of actions for the Commission to implement in the course of the current mandate. It will also include recommendations for actions by other EU institutions and bodies, Member States and stakeholders.

The strategy will focus on several thematic areas, which could include the following priorities (non-exhaustive and non-definitive list): Child participation; Digital and Information Society; Violence against children; Health, welfare and social inclusion; Education, leisure and culture; Child-friendly justice; Migration; children affected by armed conflicts. It will also include horizontal actions to foster mainstreaming and coordination. Not all thematic areas are touched upon in this consultation, which aims at collecting more in depth input under selected topics.

The strategy will build on the 2011 EU Agenda for the Rights of the child, and other relevant policy frameworks.

The ultimate objective of the strategy is to contribute to strengthening the protection of children's rights through EU action, both in the EU and in the world.

Guidance on the questionnaire

Thank you for your contribution.

All replies as well as position papers will be published online (https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child_en). Please read the privacy statement on how personal data and

contributions will be processed.

The estimated time for completion is 30 minutes.

About you

*Language of my contribution

Text

*I am giving my contribution as

*First name

*Surname

*Email (this won't be published)

*Organisation name

255 character(s) maximum

*Organisation size

Transparency register number

255 character(s) maximum

Check if your organisation is on the transparency register

(<http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do?redir=false&locale=en>). It's a voluntary database for organisations seeking to influence EU decision-making.

*Country of origin

Please add your country of origin, or that of your organisation.

Belgium

***Publication privacy settings**

The Commission will publish the responses to this public consultation. You can choose whether you would like your details to be made public or to remain anonymous.

 Anonymous

Only your type of respondent, country of origin and contribution will be published. All other personal details (name, organisation name and size, transparency register number) will not be published.

 Public

Your personal details (name, organisation name and size, transparency register number, country of origin) will be published with your contribution.

I agree with the personal data protection provisions (https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/specific-privacy-statement_en)

A. General questions

1. Over the past 10 years, the overall situation of children's rights has:

	Significantly declined	Slightly declined	Not changed	Slightly improved	Significantly improved	I don't know
In your region	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
In your country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
In the EU	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outside of the EU	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. To what extent the following population groups /professional sectors are aware of children's rights:

	Good	Satisfactory	Not good	I don't know
Children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents and families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health-care professionals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Judiciary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Law enforcement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Migration authorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

IT/digital sector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General population	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Which of the following should be a priority for action in your country? 1 star = least important, 8 stars = top priority

Child participation in the political and democratic life	
Digital and information society	
Violence in all its forms	
Welfare, health and social inclusion	
Education, leisure and culture	
Child-friendly justice	
Mainstreaming child rights in all actions	
Coordination among relevant actors	

4. Which of the following should be a priority for EU action? 1 star = least important, 8 stars = top priority

Child participation in the political and democratic life	
Digital and information society	
Violence in all its forms	
Welfare, health and social inclusion	
Education, leisure and culture	
Child-friendly justice	
Mainstreaming child rights in all actions	
Coordination among relevant actors	

5. What areas should EU action focus on, to foster the protection of children’s rights?

between 1 and 5 choices

- Introduce new or revise existing EU legislation
- Enforce and monitor the application of EU legislation
- Enhance the mainstreaming of children’s rights in all relevant EU policies
- Draft or review specific framework(s) in key policy areas
- Help Member States and third countries implement their obligations under the UNCRC
- Provide funding for projects on children’s rights inside and outside the EU
- Gather data on children’s rights
- Capacity-building and training for professionals
- Information and awareness-raising campaigns, including for children

- Strengthen cooperation and coordination between Member States
- Provide for mutual learning between EU Member States and third-countries
- Collaborate with civil society organisations and international organisations

6. Please further explain your choices above:

1,500 character(s) maximum

Investing in children is guaranteeing wellbeing for all, particularly those suffering the most: 80% Roma children face poverty; 1/3 face hunger; only 53% are enrolled in ECEC. Strong links are needed with the EU Roma Strategic Framework, as well as legislative and non-legislative initiatives to mainstream Roma rights in all policy areas, with the full involvement of Roma civil society, in order to:

- Tackle antigypsyism & intersectional discrimination.
- Collect disaggregated data by ethnic background + specific Roma indicator.
- Provide wrap-around support for parents: adequate income support & quality jobs.
- Promote positive narratives of diversity in schools + better awareness of Roma history & culture.
- Combat financial & non-financial barriers to education; fight segregation; ensure diversity in school staff.
- Tackle ghettoization & forced evictions, legalise Roma settlements, invest in adequate, affordable housing - 1/3 Roma children live in houses with a leaking roof, damp walls, or rot; 1/5 in dwellings that are too dark; 78% in overcrowded households.
- Address significant health inequalities of Roma children (life expectancy 10-15 years lower).
- Improve access to services: lack of identity papers, of a legal address, of a bank account + language barriers are deterrents.
- Support outreach measures, community-led approaches, health & school mediators.
- Implement the 2013 Investing in Children Recommendation & the 2008 Active Inclusion Recommendation

7. Covid-19 has significantly impacted children and their rights. How could child rights and child protection be better embedded in response mechanisms to the pandemic, and to emergency situations in general.

2,000 character(s) maximum

Unless explicitly mentioned as target group with specific measures in child initiatives (Guarantee, Strategy) & recovery funds, Roma children will again be left behind. The pandemic highlights the urgent need to invest in adequate care services & income support for children and their families. Already before Covid-19, over 80% of Roma were at risk of poverty & only 43% were in paid work = considerable impact on children's physical, mental & emotional development, increasing chances of lagging behind in all aspects of adult life. Many Roma children were unable to access online education, due to absent infrastructure, equipment, & skills (digital divide). Free nutritious meals need to be distributed in schools & communities, also during the holidays. Many Roma households have no access to running water or sanitation. Coverage of health insurance + access to healthcare, medicines & vaccines are very low. 41% of Roma feel discriminated against in everyday situations - this is the environment Roma children grow up in. Tackling antigypsyism towards Roma children & parents + fighting school & housing segregation should be cross-cutting priorities. Preventive & proactive measures are needed to alter public perceptions + counter misrepresentations & misinformation about Roma children. They & their parents suffered humiliation & even policy brutality during the pandemic in addition to poverty, hunger & isolation & spatial segregation. Interventions will only be effective if they achieve wide ownership by beneficiaries, if they are rooted in direct evidence from the ground & if delivery and monitoring are underpinned by a comprehensive & meaningful partnership of all stakeholders, including Roma CSOs. Tailored outreach measures need to be put in place to ensure the participation of Roma children & their parents + clear dialogue & cooperation protocols so that the voice & needs of marginalised & racialised children is heard & taken into account in recovery processes.

B. Participation in the EU political and democratic life

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements

	Full y agre e	Partial ly agree	Partially disagre e	Fully disagr ee	I don't know
Participation of children in the political and democratic life should be encouraged through EU action	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The EU should become closer to its child citizens, including through adapted communication	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EU institutions should consult children directly in policy making and programming	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The EU should support child participation at the local and national level	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child participation only matters at the local and national level, not at the EU level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. What are the main challenges to ensuring child participation in the political and democratic life in the EU? at most 3 choice(s)

- Children are not seen as citizens who have a right or the capacity to participate

- Lack of political will
- Lack of adequate expertise and know-how
- Lack of financial resources
- Difficulty to include different groups of children/ not all children have access to channels of participation

10. Which mechanism(s) should the EU develop?

at most 4 choice(s)

- Child advisory board(s)
- Children's Parliament(s)
- On-line consultations
- Ad-hoc meetings with children
- Regular consultations on upcoming legislation, policy making and programming
- Dedicated child-friendly information and campaigns
- EU competition on child participation (for schools, municipalities etc.)
- Initiatives through schools on the EU and children's rights
- Funding for child participation at local and national level

C. Digital information and society

The implications of the digital age for children's rights are manifold and ever changing. Examples are: the right to privacy and to be forgotten; the right of access to information and the right to education; the right to be safeguarded from abuse; the right to freedom of expression and the right to be heard. EU actions include the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-european-strategy-make-internet-better-place-kids>) - with EU funding to the Safer Internet Centres (<http://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/>) network and the Alliance to better protect minors online (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/alliance-better-protect-minors-online>), the Digital Education Action Plan (https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en), the 2018 Audiovisual Media Services Directive (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/audiovisual-media-services-directive-avmsd>) and data protection compliance via GDPR (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj>), as well as the potential regulatory framework on artificial intelligence (White Paper on Artificial Intelligence of 19.2.2020).

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statements

	Full y agr ee	Parti ally agre e	Parti ally disagr ee	Fully disagr ee	I don' t kno w
The European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children should be renewed	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The EU legislation in this field adequately caters for the protection of children's rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The EU plays a key role in fostering protection of children's rights in the digital environment	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
IT companies should play a bigger role in ensuring the protection of children's rights in the digital environment	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Children need to be involved in designing and regulating the world of new technologies, where they are the main users



12. What should EU action focus on, in order to foster the protection of children's rights in the digital environment?

at most 4 choice(s)

- Introduce new or revise existing EU legislation
- Enforce and monitor the application of EU legislation
- Draft or review specific policy frameworks
- Provide funding (e.g. for Safer Internet Centres)
- Gather data on children's use of new media, and the impact on their rights
- Capacity-building and training for professionals
- Information and awareness-raising campaigns, including for children
- Strengthen cooperation with IT companies
- Facilitate the participation of children to the creation of new technologies

D. Violence against children

To tackle violence against children, the EU adopted – amongst others - the 2011 Directive on sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children (including child pornography and child prostitution) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32011L0093>), the 2011 Directive on trafficking in human beings (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32011L0036>), the Victims' Rights Directive (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012L0029>), the 2020 EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse, and the 2008 EU guidelines on children in armed conflict (<https://euagenda.eu/upload/publications/untitled-188090-ea.pdf>). In addition, it co-funds Safer Internet Centers, and EU legislation established the 116 000 hotlines for missing children and the 116 111 child helplines in almost all EU Member States.

13. Which of the following should the EU focus on to help fight violence against children?

at most 4 choice(s)

- Further elaborate and promote the 2015 Principles on Integrated Child Protection Systems
- Support Member States in improving the collection of data on children affected by all types of violence
- Support cooperation and exchange among actors at national and EU level involved in the fight against violence
- Set up a Member States expert group on violence against children
- Support funding of assistance programmes in development and cooperation, assistance to the neighbourhood and humanitarian aid
- Focus on online violence, and all forms of violence related to new technologies
- Focus on gender-based violence, including harmful practices, also outside the EU
- Further promote and support the existing European child helpline and hotline for missing children
- End and prevent violence against children affected by conflicts

14. Based on your professional experience, does violence particularly affect certain groups of children?

at most 4 choice(s)

- Girls
- Boys
- LGBTI children
- Children in migration
- Children with disabilities

- Children belonging to an ethnic minority
- Children in care
- Children at school
- Street children
- Children in poverty
- Children in the online space
- Children living in conflict-affected countries/humanitarian settings
- I don't have professional experience related to this

E. Justice & Migration

In the area of child-friendly justice, a Directive on procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32016L0800>) was adopted in 2016. Child victims are also a focus of the 2012 Victims' Rights Directive (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32012L0029>). A recast of Brussels IIa Regulation was adopted in 2019 to make cross-border family proceedings cheaper and faster for children and their families. The 2020 EU Justice Scoreboard (https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/eu-justice-scoreboard_en#scoreboards) provides a comparative assessment of national developments on child-friendly justice.

In 2017, the Commission issued a Communication on the protection of children in migration (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170412_communication_on_the_protection_of_children_in_migration_en.pdf). The EU migration acquis contains special provisions for children, such as the 2003 Family reunification Directive (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32003L0086>), the Dublin Regulation (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=celex%3A32013R0604>), the 2013 Reception conditions Directive (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013L0033>) or the 2013 Asylum Procedure Directive (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=celex%3A32013L0032>).

15. Do you see gaps in EU legislation on child-friendly justice, or issues in its implementation? What further legislative action, if any, should the EU take in this field?

2,000 character(s) maximum

This is not our direct area of expertise.

16. Where should the EU act first, to contribute to child-friendly justice systems?

at most 4 choice(s)

- Introduce new or revise existing EU legislation (where it is competent to legislate)
- Enforce and monitor the application of EU legislation
- Draft or review specific policy framework
- Provide funding for authorities and other actors involved in the justice system
- Gather data
- Capacity-building and training for professionals, also outside the EU
- Information and awareness-raising campaigns, including for children
- Strengthen cooperation and coordination at EU level and between Member States

17. The 2017 Communication on the protection of children in migration remains the framework for EU action in this field. What parts of the Communication have not progressed enough in your opinion, and where would you suggest efforts be concentrated in the future?

2,000 character(s) maximum

This is not our direct area of expertise.

18. Are there other priorities (which are not included in the 2017 Communication) which you would like EU action to focus on?

1,500 character(s) maximum

- The plight of ethnic minorities: those with a different ethnic origin to the majority without being migrants / refugees / asylum-seekers.
- Intra-EU mobility: children moving between MS with their working parents. Roma children are full citizens of the countries they live in for centuries, yet their rights are not respected + they have little or no recourse to justice. Antigypsyism is the most widespread & the most tolerated form of discrimination in Europe yet it is not dealt with on equal footing with similar racist phenomena like anti-Semitism or Islamophobia. Roma children are subjected to exclusion, school & housing segregation, bullying, humiliation, and even physical violence on a daily basis, because of both their ethnicity & their socio-economic background + other intersectional grounds. Their wellbeing must be a key objective for any policy intervention concerning itself with children's rights, particularly the most vulnerable like those from racialised & impoverished communities. Many CEE Roma parents are seasonal workers in the West, with poorly regulated contracts & limited access to rights & benefits, including child support & services. Roma children are overrepresented among children in poverty, street children & children in care, which makes them twice as vulnerable to trafficking, violence & abuse, including from state services and the police. If children in general are not considered citizens with rights, poor Roma children are considered even less so.

Further information

If you wish to add further relevant comments or information, please do so here:

2,000 character(s) maximum

- The Strategy must differentiate between different groups of children with specific needs and integrate disaggregated (sub)targets and data collection, as well as specific measures and indicators, to deal with the specific challenges of key vulnerable groups of children, such as Roma children.
- The Strategy should equally include horizontal actions to foster mainstreaming and coordination at EU and national level, by building strong links with the European Pillar of Social Rights (including the Child Guarantee), the European Semester, as well as thematic strategies for key groups, such as the EU Roma Framework for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation.
- It is a pity that this consultation did not equally touch upon the key aspects of health, welfare, social inclusion, education, which are fundamental for a child's wellbeing and development.
- It is regrettable that other key dimensions, such as poverty, housing, access to adequate income, or fighting discrimination and segregation, which are not even mentioned at all.
- There are no poor children in rich families, and any strategy on the rights of the child must envisage ample, comprehensive, integrated support for parents to provide a healthy, harmonious and inclusive environment for their children, in line with both the Investing in Children as well as the Active Inclusion Recommendations. Investing in adequate income support for parents, through child allowances, adequate minimum income schemes, and personalised support towards quality jobs is the cornerstone for providing better lives for children.
- These rights must be ensured across all Member States, also for mobile intra-EU seasonal workers, who often have to bring their children with them when going to work abroad. These are some of the least protected workers in Europe, with substandard wages as well as working and living conditions and poor access to rights and resources, and their children bear the brunt of these inequalities.

Please feel free to upload a concise document, such as additional evidence supporting your responses, or a position paper. The uploaded document will be published alongside your response to the questionnaire.

Please upload your file

Contact

EC-CHILD-RIGHTS@ec.europa.eu