



Towards investing in children in the European Neighborhood

Eurochild

Response to the Joint Consultation paper “Towards a new European Neighbourhood policy”

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General statement

Eurochild warmly welcomes the inclusion of youth as a focus area in the framework for sector cooperation and the intended increased engagement with young people, including through educational exchanges and other networks. However, in line with the EU’s sponsorship and Armenia, Georgia and Moldova’s co-sponsorship of the UNHRC resolution on Investment in the Rights of the Child, and considering that child poverty and child protection are key social issues in the region, investment in children in the form of resources, access to services and participation is urgently warranted to ensure the opportunities and engagement of future generations in the European neighbourhood.

The European neighbourhood instrument has proved to be a potentially useful tool in dealing with some of the most important violations of children’s rights, rooted in child poverty, but it’s more than financial investment that is required. The EU’s political investment in promotion of the rights of the child as an integral part of its neighborhood policy is crucial. Children and social issues should be included as part of the Association Agendas/ENP Action Plans and other political engagement strategies and dialogues with its neighbours.

The European Neighborhood policy has great potential for impact in these areas. Moldova, for



example, approved a child protection strategy for 2014-2020 to reduce the number of children in residential care, to prevent and combat violence against children and prevent exploitation, and to assist families in balancing work and family life. Ukraine shows progress within the areas of human rights and civil society development, even if more targeted child protection approaches could drastically improve the situation for many children, including the 70 000 children stuck in institutions in Ukraine.¹

That is why Eurochild calls for a broad focus on investing in children, integrated child protection and overall promotion of the rights of the child. We also urge the EU to fully support civil society as a driving force for democratic transformation and European integration.

Our perspective on the implementation of such a focus on child rights and wellbeing, as related to the questions posed in the review, is detailed below.

Regarding II. Lessons learned and questions for future direction of ENP

- *P. 5 Are new elements needed to support deeper cooperation in these or other fields?*
- *P. 5 How can we empower economically, politically and socially the younger generation?*

Eurochild welcomes the inclusion of youth as a focus area in the framework for sector cooperation but would like to call for a cooperation on the rights and wellbeing of children and on socio-economic inequalities and child poverty, with a much broader remit than a singular focus of inclusion of young people in the labour market, in order to achieve real economical, political and social empowerment of the younger generation. Early investment, such as in education from an early age, prevention, and child participation are, after all, key factors contributing to later successful inclusion in the labour market, and all other areas of life.

- *P.6 How should the ENP further develop engagement with civil society in it's widest sense?*
- *P. 6 How can the ENP help tackle discrimination against vulnerable groups?*

Eurochild welcomes the focus on engaging with civil society and would like to stress the importance of supporting civil society as an alternative source of information about the situation on the ground and as independent advocates of children's rights. Moreover, the EU should facilitate civil society' role in monitoring the use of EU funds. Engagement of children's civil society organisations, and organisations with young people in leadership at all stages (including the elaboration and monitoring of EU laws and policy frameworks) is a critical factor of success for ensuring that EU funds are used to meet local needs, to meet young people's real

¹ <http://www.openingdoors.eu/where-the-campaign-operates/ukraine/>



needs, and to ensure that funds are being spent in a way that is sustainable on the long term to ensure future generations' rights, and engagement. Participatory or citizen's budgets, including the input of children, are – for example – a good way to increase stakeholder engagement and ownership and to direct funds to the real local needs of populations.

Regarding III. Towards a partnership with a clearer focus and more tailored cooperation

- *P. 8 Do you agree with the proposed areas of focus? If not, what alternative or additional priorities would you propose?*

As mentioned before, Eurochild welcomes the inclusion of youth as a focus area but calls for a broader focus on the rights and wellbeing of children as a priority for the European neighborhood policy, to ensure the engagement and inclusion of future generations.

About Eurochild

Eurochild advocates for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking. We are a network of organisations working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work. The network is co-funded by the European Union's programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI).

