



## DECLARATION<sup>1</sup> OF THE PERMANENT INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP "EUROPE DE L'ENFANCE", MEETING ON 16 NOVEMBER 2010 IN BRUSSELS

In the framework of the Permanent Intergovernmental Group "Europe de l'Enfance", Ministers and other representatives of Member States responsible for childhood policies, meeting on 16 November 2010 in Brussels at the invitation of the Belgian Presidency, have taken several recommendations to influence the policies of the next decade of the European Union and the member States.

The Permanent intergovernmental Group "Europe de l'Enfance" agrees to realise a regular evaluation of progress made towards meeting recommendations and commitments taken in the framework of this declaration, notably on the occasion of future meetings of the Group.

Concerning the comparison and synergies between the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights

The Group "Europe de l'Enfance" welcomes the fact that on this occasion they have for the first time a real chance to exchange about comparisons and possible synergies between the European and International policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights and recommends the following:

1. To welcome the information provided in the document "The European and International Policy Agendas on Children, Youth and Children's Rights, A Belgian EU Presidency – Youth Note" as a very useful reference document for further policy development;
2. To replace in the Terms of Reference of the Permanent Intergovernmental Group "Europe de l'Enfance", as revised in Prague on 7 April 2008, the paragraph under 'Background' by what follows:  
"Children<sup>2</sup> are not a concrete element of the EU's sphere of authority, but many decisions made by the EU affect the lives of children directly or indirectly, such as legislative instruments related to many aspects i.e. social protection, the labour market, the media, health, justice, education, culture, youth, the environment as well as consumer and food issues."
3. To encourage the Member States, the EU and other international institutions to explore, exchange good practices and improve synergies across the different policy areas and organisations of the European Union, Council of Europe and United Nations to enhance coherence and efficiency in the implementation of the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights at member state, European and international level;
4. To promote activities which strengthen the knowledge and action on children's issues and to increase cooperation with other national and international, governmental, nongovernmental and academic key actors on children's rights in particular in the fields of education, justice, social services, health and youth, as well in cooperation i.e. with the youth organisations, the Ombudspersons for children or other institutions for the promotion and protection of the right of the child;
5. To reinforce the cooperation with the youth sector, building upon shared thematic priorities of participation and poverty and social exclusion at national, European and international level.
6. To continue to support measures to fight against poverty and to reduce poverty and social exclusion in particular as they affect children and young people, and to take note of the Trio (Spain, Belgium, Hungary) Declaration of the EU Belgian Presidency Conference: Roadmap for a Recommendation on Child Poverty and Child Well-Being, adopted in Marche-en-Famenne, on 3 September 2010.

---

<sup>1</sup> The terms of Reference for the Permanent Intergovernmental Group "Europe de l'Enfance" states : "The group cannot adopt binding declarations, as Europe de l'Enfance does not have official status"

<sup>2</sup> By child is understood (cf. Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child): "Every human being below the age of eighteen years."



7. To support the development of child well being indicators using existing models of best practice reflecting children and young people's views of well being as well as the perspective of adults.
8. To take into account the concluding observations and general comments of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child towards the Member States in the framework of the implementation of the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights.

#### Concerning the new communication of the European Commission about the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child

The Group "Europe de l'Enfance" supports the contribution of the Belgian Presidency of the Permanent Intergovernmental Group "Europe de l'Enfance" to the European Commission regarding the development of a new communication about the EU strategy on the rights of the child which calls for a focussed strategy reflecting the wide range of positive impacts the EU can have on children's rights inside and outside the Union and the broad possibilities available to the EU within its competences to improve the lives of children through legislation, policies, exchange of good practices, data collection, development cooperation and other actions.

#### Concerning Early Childhood Education and Care

The Group "Europe de l'Enfance" acknowledges for each child from birth the fundamental right to promoting, supporting and encouraging his/her development. The parents or guardians are responsible for their child's upbringing and development. Early childhood education and care should supplement the home by creating the best possible pre-conditions for ensuring that each child's development is rich and varied.

The Group "Europe de l'Enfance" acknowledges the parental freedom of choice to use Early childhood Education and Care services (ECEC) or not and that the development of ECEC services must be part of a wider integrated policy on families and children which integrates measures to support the families, inter alia parental leave, and takes into account the national historical and cultural context. ECEC services are defined as formal childcare structures, regulated and organised in group and family settings that realise educational, social and economic functions. ECEC services are aimed at every child and his/her family without drawing any distinctions.

The Group "Europe de l'Enfance" recommends:

1. To orient policies and public funding where possible in favour of the development and well-being of children and to consider this as an investment for the future.
2. To make a responsible and realistic commitment to continue the development of a high quality supply of early education and care services, taking due account of the socio-economic situation in each EU Member State. Countries having achieved the objectives set in 2002 by the Barcelona European Council to consider setting more ambitious objectives for the decade ahead.
3. To examine proposals to adopt for these purpose activities in a coherent policy framework, regulated and controlled by public administration, in order to encourage a supply both accessible and affordable for all.
4. To promote measures to ensure that all children can access high-quality, diversified and integrated ECEC services in order to suit all situations experienced by children and their families. Particularly, to guarantee access of ECEC services for children with special needs and children in a vulnerable or poverty situation and therefore ensure guidance of these children and their families.
5. To develop mechanisms to ensure that the appropriate requirements in terms of the infrastructure, the adult to children ratio, the staff qualifications and the size of groups necessary for the implementation of high-quality ECEC services are provided. These mechanisms take account of the resource availability within each member state.



6. To develop incentives aimed at developing pedagogical approaches which recognise diversity and which are based on the competencies and needs of children in addition to the participation of all stakeholders (children, families, professionals, other citizens), whilst respecting the child's own background and roots.
7. To examine and develop qualification criteria, educational systems and other learning frameworks for staff with a view to issuing recommendations regarding professionalization by investing available resources in basic and continuous training and professional support for all staff in ECEC services, which also focus on working with young children in vulnerable situations and their parents.
8. As the occasion arises, in function of the national juridical situations, to work towards ensuring favourable working conditions, salary levels, and professional status compatible with those acquired in stable employment and long-term professional investment. To contribute through these measures towards increasing social promotion of ECEC services and encouraging the gender mix of staff.
9. To continue in each member State and at European level with work led in helping to define those conditions necessary for achieving high-quality education and care services and developing coherent procedures to gather and analyse data about all activities developed by ECEC services.
10. To support and develop researches and networks (of researchers, practitioners, parents and politicians) with a view to encouraging the exchange of information, experiences and good practices, involving multiple theoretical sources and analysis of practices.
11. To achieve a regular evaluation (by each member state) of progress in implementing the ECEC policies and to support participative, democratic and transparent evaluation processes relating to the quality and accessibility of services, founded on a public debate of all stakeholders.