

VOTE FOR CHILDREN



Child Rights Action Group's call for the re-establishment of the European Parliament Intergroup on Children's Rights

September 2024



What is the Intergroup on Children's Rights?

Children make up 20% of the population of the European Union. While children are affected by all the legislations and funding decisions adopted at the European (EU) level, there is no committee in the European Parliament (EP) that has the specific mandate of promoting and protecting children's rights in the EU policy-making process. Created for the first time in the 2014–2019 European Parliament's legislature and re-established in the next one (2019–2024), the Intergroup on Children's Rights has been the only formal body in the European Parliament with the objective to bring children's voices and interests to the EU decision-making process, mainstream children's rights in all EU legislative processes and debates and assess the impact of legislative and non-legislative work on children.

The Intergroup on Children's Rights is a **cross-party** and **cross-national** group of committed Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) working together with child-focused civil society and international organisations to keep children's rights on top of the EU's agenda, raising awareness on children's rights and the state of play around the world, highlighting issues affecting children, advocating for legislative changes. Together they ensure that EU policies, both internal and external, protect the rights of children and do not have a harmful impact on children's development and well-being in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The work of the Intergroup is based on the [Child Rights Manifesto](#) drafted by a coalition of child-focused organisations, working towards the realisation of the EU's legal and policy commitments to promote and protect children's rights, and the obligations set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC).

Examples of achievements and activities of the previous Intergroup on Children's Rights

- Organisation of events on children's rights (e.g. 2021 seminar on securing access to equal rights for children of LGBTI families, 2021 conference on combating child sexual abuse)
- Statements and press releases addressing critical issues affecting children in Europe and worldwide
- Missions to EU Member States (e.g. mission to Poland in March 2022 to assess the needs of displaced children fleeing Ukraine)
- Participation of the Secretary General of the Intergroup to the Advisory Board of the EU Children's Participation Platform – the first mechanism at EU level to consult children on European legislation and policies that concern them.
- Participation in civil society organisations' events, such as the launch of the #VoteForChildren campaign of the Child Rights Action Group ahead of the 2024 EU elections.

Why is an Intergroup on Children's Rights important?

Issues such as **poverty, inequalities, digital transformation, conflicts, climate change and environmental disasters**, and **migration** disproportionately affect children. Political and societal changes also have an impact on children now and in the future.

As a diverse group with varying needs based on age, background, and experiences, children require tailored considerations in the EU policy-making.

Children's rights are cross-cutting and intersect with a variety of EU policy areas, including education, healthcare, social protection, digital, migration, housing, development and humanitarian aid, climate and environment, emergencies, and justice. EU decisions in these areas have a significant impact on the lives of children and their families, making it essential to take into account their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

In the last political cycle, the EU has been a champion for children's rights within and outside the EU with the adoption of landmark initiatives such as the [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#), the [EU Child Guarantee](#) and the [Youth Action Plan](#), and with mainstreaming children's rights into other policy and legislative instruments. The re-establishment of the European Parliament Intergroup on Children's Rights for the upcoming legislature will serve as a pivotal mechanism for advocating and ensuring the full implementation of child-centred policies with adequate resources, the monitoring and evaluation of those key frameworks, the consistent consideration of children's rights across all EU policies and policy coherence.

The Intergroup on Children's Rights will help avoid working in silos between the various relevant committees in the European Parliament (such as EMPL, LIBE, ENVI, SANT, CULT, DEVE, AFET, FEMM, INTA, BUDG) and will foster expertise and best-practice exchanges among MEPs and civil society, international organisations and children themselves.

For an EU that is forward-looking and future-ready, it is paramount that the Intergroup on Children's Rights is re-established to ensure that children are considered in all EU internal and external actions and investments.

In the current context of numerous competing priorities at the EU level, there is a risk that children's rights will be deprioritised and overlooked if the Intergroup is not re-established. As research has shown, societies that invest in children are more competitive, more democratic, more resilient, and more cohesive – with multiple benefits for the whole society and future generations.

Suggested Intergroup governance and activities for this legislature

The Child Rights Action Group (CRAG) recommendations for the Intergroup's governance and activities:

- **Balanced and Expert Leadership:** the Intergroup should ensure balanced representation of political groups and thematic expertise within the Intergroup's leadership, with all members endorsing the Child Rights Manifesto and operating in accordance with the UN CRC.
- **Comprehensive Scope:** we recommend the Intergroup to address all areas of children's rights, including, but not limited to, child protection (offline and online), digitalization, migration, child poverty, support to families and family-like care, education, and health (including mental health), justice, statelessness, climate change and environmental degradation, development aid and humanitarian action. It should also take public positions and issue statements on any legislative files impacting children's development and well-being.
- **Integration and Coordination:** the Intergroup should closely coordinate with the European Parliament's Child Rights Coordinator and the European Commission Coordinator for the Rights of the Child, ensuring coherence and alignment among the institutions and fostering collaboration with EU Member States at Council level. Members should act as child rights focal points in relevant committees, integrating children's issues into broader discussions.
- **Legislative & Policy work:** Members of the Intergroup should submit amendments to promote and protect children's rights in all European Parliament's "own initiative" reports, resolutions and opinions. Members should call on the European Commission for a systematic impact assessment of any new legislative proposals to ensure it does not harm children and act as spokespersons for children's rights in the debates in plenary and committee sessions. During EU Commissioners' hearings, members of the Intergroup are invited to submit oral and written questions to the relevant EU Commissioners to ensure they deliver for all children. In particular, this legislature will feature decisive negotiations for the future Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034). The Intergroup on Children's Rights will be instrumental to secure a child-centered EU budget, which invests in all children – meaning investing in the EU's future competitiveness and prosperity including high social standards. The political guidelines include a number of initiatives that are relevant for children and the Intergroup on Children's Rights should ensure they promote and protect children's rights: e.g. an anti-poverty strategy, the action plan on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the action plan against cyber bullying, a new antiracism strategy and an updated strategy on LGBTIQ.

- **Advocacy, Research, Events and Participation:** The Intergroup should commit to celebrating [World Children's Day](#) and the UN CRC anniversary on November 20th as a key moment to assess the state of play of children's rights and EU's contribution to protect and promote children's rights in Europe and worldwide. The Intergroup needs to promote the systematic use of the [EU Children's Participation Platform](#) to incorporate children's voices into policy-making and actively contribute to the EU Children's Participation Platform's Advisory Board. The Intergroup has the power to commission research and reports on the state of children's rights in the EU and organise events and hearings to discuss pressing issues, and facilitating meaningful, inclusive and safe child participation.
- **Collaboration with CRAG and Civil Society:** Regular meetings between the Child Rights Action Group and the Intergroup leadership should be organised to discuss priorities, work programme, and progress. The Intergroup has to ensure meaningful engagement with children and civil society, and systematically integrate their expertise into parliamentary processes.
- **Accountability and Evaluation:** The Intergroup should develop an annual work plan with inputs from the Child Rights Action Group with opportunities for civil society engagement, foster communication with other relevant European Parliament's Intergroups, and implement mechanisms for children's feedback on legislation. Midterm and final evaluations of the Intergroup's activities should be conducted, incorporating feedback from civil society and other stakeholders.

The Child Rights Action Group is the widest informal network of child rights organisations at EU level.

Contact information of CRAG's Co-Chairs:

Louise Reeg, EU Advocacy Advisor, SOS Children's Villages International – louise.reeg@sos-kd.org

Léa Meindre-Chautrand, Senior Advocacy Officer, Missing Children Europe – lea.meindre-chautrand@missingchildreneurope.eu

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Harry, 14, Bulgaria

