



Brussels, 16 March 2015

Statement of the EU Alliance for Investing in Childrenⁱ on the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines COM(2015) 98 & 99

A NARROWING FOCUS ON GROWTH & JOBS WILL FAIL OUR CHILDREN AND OUR FUTURE

In October 2014, the **EU Alliance for Investing in Children**, which brings together 24 European networks sharing a commitment to end child poverty and to promote children's rights and child well-being, responded to the public consultation on the Europe 2020 Strategy. In its response, the EU Alliance argued that the Europe 2020 strategy is potentially the main tool to realise **the European Commission Recommendation *Investing in Children – Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage***.ⁱⁱ The Recommendation is a commitment endorsed by Member States calling for concerted efforts to end child poverty and promote child well-being across Europe.

Following the publication of the new Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines on 2 March 2015, we want to highlight our concern and reiterate our messages.

Specific child poverty targets

European and national (sub-) targets should be set for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion, specifically as part of the Europe 2020 target on poverty reduction.

Recent reports show that children and young people are the most at risk of poverty in the European Unionⁱⁱⁱ. Not only have poverty levels increased in the past years, but inequality gaps in Europe have widened. It is particularly worrying that besides the factor of employability, children and young people are no longer recognised as a policy and investment priority.

Comprehensive frameworks for inclusive growth

Investing in children needs to be comprehensively addressed across sectors (employment, financial, social services, education, health, housing and fundamental rights, etc). Only then will interventions and investments lead to a sustainable and inclusive exit from the crisis and prevent youth unemployment.

The Integrated Guidelines are shifting Europe 2020 away from being a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, to - in line with the Investment Plan^{iv} - one for "jobs, growth and investment". Both Europe 2020 and the Investing in Children Recommendation are comprehensive frameworks owned by the EU, but some key elements have been completely neglected in the new Integrated Guidelines, such as social protection and prevention to break the cycle of disadvantage.

Guidelines for stakeholder engagement

The European Commission should develop, as it had committed, a set of guidelines for the engagement of stakeholders in Europe 2020, under the new framework.

The summarised result of the public consultation^v acknowledged that ownership of the Europe 2020 strategy was limited and stakeholder involvement lacking. The role of civil society, including children's rights organisations, in ensuring EU policy coherence remains to be recognised in practice.

We are struck by the narrow vision of the Integrated Guidelines and its transformation of the strategy into a soft-spoken echo of the Investment Plan. Such an approach ignores the need for social investment and complementarity between structural reforms. It is short-sighted and ill-fated.

-end

ⁱ The EU Alliance for Investing in Children is a temporary initiative supported in 2014 by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS / EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation. It brings together 24 European networks sharing a commitment to end child poverty and to promote child well-being across Europe. The EU Alliance for Investing in Children plans to continue as an informal cooperation.

Partners of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children include:

- Alliance for Childhood
- ATD Quart Monde
- Caritas - Europa
- COFACE – Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union
- Don Bosco International
- Dynamo International – Street Workers Network
- EAPN – European Anti-Poverty Network
- EASPD – European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities
- ECSA - European Child Safety Alliance
- ELIANT Network
- ENSA – European Network of Social Authorities
- EPA - The European Parents Association
- EPHA - European Public Health Alliance
- ESN – European Social Network
- Eurochild
- Eurodiaconia
- EuroHealthNet
- FEANTSA – European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless
- ISSA - The International Step by Step Association
- Mental Health Europe
- PICUM – Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
- Save the Children EU Office
- SOS Children's Villages International
- UNICEF EU Office

ⁱⁱ [European Commission Recommendation](#) of 20 February 2013 Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage (2013/112/EU)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Smarter, greener, more inclusive? Indicators to support the Europe 2020 strategy](#), Eurostat, 2015

^{iv} Communication from the Commission on an [Investment Plan for Europe](#) 26 November 2014, COM(2014) 903

^v Communication from the Commission on [Results of the public consultation on the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth](#) COM(2015) 100

See the response of the EU Alliance to the European Commission's questionnaire on Europe 2020 [here](#).

EU Alliance for Investing in Children website: www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu

Twitter hashtag: [#Alliance4IC](#)

Contact: Eurochild, info@eurochild.org Avenue des Arts 1-2, 1210 Brussels, Belgium