



**Open letter to European Commission:
Seeking a successor to the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child**

Brussels, 29 April 2015

**Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker
President of the European Commission
B-1048 Brussels**

- cc. First Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr. Frans Timmermans
- cc. European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Ms. Vera Jourova
- cc. All Permanent Representatives to the European Union

Dear President Jean-Claude Juncker,

We, the undersigned organisations, are writing to urge the European Commission to develop a comprehensive successor to the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child, as was called for by the Council of the European Union in its Conclusions of December 2014 and by the European Parliament in its Resolution of November of that year.

The EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child (henceforth, the Agenda) has been of great importance for the work initiated by the European Commission on children’s rights, including on the priorities that were identified such as promoting child-friendly justice and safer internet, or protecting children from violence and addressing discrimination and social exclusion. One concrete example of a positive outcome of the Agenda is the fact that the network of 116 000 hotlines for missing children expanded to include 27 Member States in 2014 as compared to 11 Member States in 2011.

However, this first Agenda expired in 2014 and much remains to be done both within the EU and throughout the world. Many challenges and child rights violations remain and new ones are emerging. Many of these need a European response which addresses the root causes of rights violations and either fills the existing gaps or addresses cross-border issues in the areas of justice, migration, poverty reduction, social inclusion, education, health, sustainable development etc.

The Treaty of Lisbon and the Charter of Fundamental Rights enshrine the EU’s responsibility to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in all relevant EU policies and actions. Translating these commitments and obligations into a reality where the best interests of the child are at the centre of EU policy, legislation, funding and human rights promotion, however, requires strong leadership and a solid EU instrument to guide EU action.

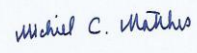
It is of critical importance that the momentum created by the former Agenda is not lost through a lack of vision, effective planning and strategic guidance for all staff and representatives of the EU going forward. The

new Agenda should be developed in consultation with stakeholders and build on the key successes achieved under the previous framework. Concretely, it must mainstream children's rights, ensure systematic inter-departmental and inter-institutional cooperation on children's rights, promote regular dialogue with stakeholders (incl. child rights organisations) and enhance policy coherence between the internal and external dimensions of EU action and between policy areas, in line with the objectives of the Lisbon Treaty. A new Agenda is also needed to consolidate the EU's key role in promoting, protecting and fulfilling children's rights both within the Union and throughout the world. This will be particularly important as the EU sets out to implement the universal post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, as highlighted in Commission Communications including the 2014 "A Decent Life for All: From Vision to Collective Action". The successor to the EU Agenda must take a rights-based approach, firmly grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as the December 2014 Council Conclusions recommended.

The principle that investment in children's development and well-being is smart, sustainable and pays off from social, economic and political perspectives, underpins the European Commission's 2013 Recommendation "Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage". Without a clear guiding document for the coming years, the EU's promotion of children's rights and well-being risks being ad hoc, weak and even ineffective. It is against this background that we, international and European children's rights organisations, call on the European Commission to adopt a comprehensive, new and robust Agenda outlining a clear framework for EU action on the rights of the child in Europe and abroad.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter and very much look forward to following up on our recommendations in a meeting with you shortly.

You can reach all of us via: info@childrightsmanifesto.eu



Michiel C. Matthes
Secretary-General
Alliance for Childhood European Network Group.



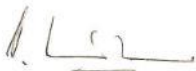
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