



Brussels, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020

To the Attention of:  
President of the European Council Charles Michel  
President of the European Parliament David Sassoli  
President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen

Copy:  
Vice-President of the Commission, Dubravka Šuica  
Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit  
Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli

**Open letter of COFACE Families Europe on  
the Joint Declaration of the Ministers of the EPSCO Council:**

***“Overcoming poverty and social exclusion – mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on families – working together to develop prospects for strong children”***

COFACE Families Europe welcomes this important declaration proposed at the initiative of the German Presidency of the EU by the presidency trio of Portugal, Slovenia and Germany. A declaration which calls for swift and effective action to support families and children as they cope with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now is an even more crucial time to focus our energies on shaping a healthy society, environment and economy fit for children. All children are entitled to a healthy and fair life. To ensure this, we need to look at their interlinked surroundings of influence in a holistic way, taking the families and children’s perspective as focus point.

We are convinced that children will thrive if their family thrive and if the whole society cares enough to provide for them. Parents and caregivers play a central role in children’s lives. In so many fields the solution begins at home. Families can be considered as first safety net, which need to be supported by well-established and quality family support systems. It is fundamental that European and national policies champion children and their families’ well-being and bring families and children to the heart of policy making.

Policies must prioritise investing in children and their families and ensure that adequate and quality support is provided through a systemic two-generation approach based on the interrelated well-being of children and their parents (and grand-parents, whose economic and caring role has increased over the last decade since the 2008 financial crisis). This means that policies focusing on children’s well-being must support families and their inherent capabilities with a focus on empowerment, participation, and strengthening competences of all families in their daily lives while also looking beyond social policy.



COFACE's [Child Compass 2030](#) presents this direction to take to develop comprehensive, integrated and long-term strategies to support both children and their families, all types without discrimination.

As the first wave of the pandemic hit European families, we sent an Open Letter to the Presidents of the three EU institutions: European Commission, European Parliament, and Council of the EU. The [responses](#) received, showed a political will to act swiftly but we are still yet to see support reach families in vulnerable situations. The [declaration](#) of our COFACE Disability platform "Forgotten" followed the Open Letter, highlighting the forgotten work of family carers across Europe, acting as safety nets as various care and support services were forced to close due to lockdowns.

Moreover, our [key recommendations](#) to help families and the economy bounce back offered some key directions for European policy and law making throughout 2020, which we are also feeding into the public consultations on the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Child Guarantee. As indicated in our [policy brief](#) on the "Changing Face of Work and Family Life under COVID-19", Member States have responded to the needs of families through a mix of extraordinary leaves, care vouchers, flexible work solutions, reflecting a combination of measures based on resources, services and flexible working arrangements. These measures need to be intensified and continued until sustainable solutions are found. [Important recommendations](#) on the future European Child Guarantee were made in our event on the "European Child Guarantee: A tool to tackle family poverty?" in Berlin on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

COFACE Families Europe is ready to address challenges of today and tomorrow in partnership with the European Institutions in an attempt to find sustainable and lasting solutions, to modernise and rethink family policy and drive real change through our family support services and advocacy. We count on the European Union to shift towards an economy which cares, an economy at the service of society. We count on the EU institutions for a mix of actions and for the redirection of the EU budgets towards family support to drive change and to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, and real guarantees in the upcoming Action Plan for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, and thus reinforcing a more social and fairer Europe.

sgd. **Annemie Drieskens**  
President, COFACE Families Europe

sgd. **Sven Iversen**  
Vice-President, COFACE Families Europe  
Director, Association of German Family  
Organisations (AGF)