



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
External Relations 



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE EU'S EXTERNAL POLICY

Objective

To observe as a matter of priority the promotion and protection of all rights of the child in the EU's external relations based on a sustained and systematic action

Basic principles

- **Active promotion of the rights of the child** – as an integral part of the EU's external policy on human rights, including in development, humanitarian, peace and security context

- **Human rights-based approach** – based the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: non-discrimination, best interest of the child, child participation, child survival and development
- **Holistic approach** - interdependence, indivisibility and interrelation of children's rights
- **Full conformity with relevant international instruments and standards** – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols but also “soft law”, e.g. documents of UN bodies

Policy framework

- **European Consensus on Development (2005)** – reaffirms the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach towards the promotion and protection of the rights of the child
- **Commission Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on Children” (2006)** – marked the launch of a long-term EU strategy to promote and safeguard children's rights in the EU's internal and external relations
- **EU Guidelines on the Rights of the Child (2007)** – with a purpose to promote the rights of the child worldwide through the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and by ensuring that the rights of the child are taken into account in all EU policies and actions

- **EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflicts (2003, updated 2008)** – commits the EU to address the short, medium and long term impact of armed conflicts on children in an effective and comprehensive manner, making use of the variety of tools at its disposal
- **Commission Communication “A Special Place for Children in EU External Relations” (2008) and the attached Action Plan** – identifies the policy framework, priority areas, programming tools and guiding principles to progress on children's rights in selected priority areas
- **Commission Staff Working Document “Children in Emergency and Crisis Situations” (2008)** – provides framework for humanitarian actions towards children in crisis situations, with a focus on separated and non-accompanied children, child soldiers and education in emergencies
- **Conclusions of the Council of the European Union (2008)** – enhances the EU's-wide external policy on children's rights with the special focus on the development and humanitarian dimensions



Tools (selected)

- **Political dialogues** – inclusion of children's rights in discussions at all levels in bilateral relations with third countries and at multilateral fora
- **Development cooperation** – providing financial and technical assistance, and development cooperation programmes
- **Actions at multilateral fora** – such as tabling resolution at the UN, support for international initiatives
- **Partnerships and cooperation with other stakeholders** – e.g. with international organisations and civil society

Main financial instruments

- European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)
- Investing in People
- Geographic allocations

International cooperation

- Close cooperation with UNICEF
- Tabling resolution at the UN, including at the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly Third Committee
- Strategic Partnership with ILO on child labour
- Policy consultations and support to projects implemented by civil society in third countries

Children's Rights Toolkit

- Developed by UNICEF with support of the EC
- Will provide practical tools on how to effectively integrate children's rights into political, legal, budgetary and programmatic actions

Current focus areas

- Violence against children
- Children affected by armed conflicts
- Child labour

Recent events (selected)

- European Forum on the Rights of the Child, 18 June 2009, Brussels
- EU-NGO Human Rights Forum on Violence against Children, 6-7 July 2009, Stockholm

Reference documents (selected)

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC)

- Optional Protocol to the UN CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- Optional Protocol to the UN CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict
- UN Study on Violence against Children (2006)
- ILO Convention 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour
- ILO Convention 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment
- Millennium Development Goals

More information

- http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/child/index_en.htm

