EU responses to coronavirus focused on children.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus, the European Commission adopted a number of concrete measures to help address the situation, and the impact of the measures adopted by the EU Members States. Assistance has been also provided to third countries.

We asked colleagues to let us know the situation of children was addressed in these responses. Below please find a summary table, which is not exhaustive.

Topic	**Action**
External actions: child sexual abuse and exploitation	Spotlight Initiative in 24 countries worldwide: action to counter increased domestic violence, boost prevention and support survivors and organisations, e.g. support to shelters and helplines. More than €14 million will be channelled through the existing UN Trust Funds (Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women for civil society) for core funding and actions.
External actions: Child protection, violence against children	€10 million is directed for maintaining or reinforcing child protection mechanisms in Sub-Saharan Africa and to address violence against vulnerable children in the context of the pandemic, with a particular emphasis on child participation/consultation during the crisis. EU-funded Global Programmes on child protection, such as the ones implemented by UNICEF/UNFPA on ending child marriage and on the abandonment of FGM, are being readjusted to reduce the impact of the pandemic on the rights of children and girls.
	Guidance were issued on retargeting of EIDHR CBSS (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS)) funds on HR-related challenges of Covid-19. Domestic violence is one of priority areas mentioned in the guidance.
External actions: Humanitarian assistance	Under the priority "Urgent, short-term emergency response to the health crisis and the resulting humanitarian needs", the Communication lists the various key challenges to be addressed and how the EU contributes to this end. The total funding for this priority includes allocations from a number of different sources and funding instruments. Regarding DG ECHO, it includes: 1) **30 million EUR contribution to WHO's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan**, and; 2) the **adaptation, as far as possible, of ongoing and planned imminent humanitarian projects** to factor in the COVID-19 situation and related needs, ensuring the continued provision of life-saving operations within humanitarian sectors. DG ECHO funds will not be redirected from previously identified humanitarian crises to COVID-19 needs. Where possible, ongoing EU humanitarian funded operations are being adapted to factor in COVID-19. Newly funded projects will, to the extent possible, also be adapted to take into account the pandemic. This includes current and future projects relevant for children. For instance, in 2019, it is estimated that the EU allocated approximately EUR 78 million EUR of its humanitarian aid budget to child protection activities and EUR 164 million to Education in Emergencies (of

	which 65% of these projects have integrated protection elements).
External actions: cooperation with international community	In a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU seeks to maximise partnerships across the board to promote coordination in multilateral fora. The EU together with the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries and the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs published **a joint statement expressing support to the implementation of the UNSG Call to Prioritize Children's Education, Food, Health and Safety** amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. **171 Member States and Observers** joined the statement.
Child friendly justice	A comparative table on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on civil justice and judicial cooperation in the Union has been published on the European e-Justice Portal. The table provides an overview of the information regarding the temporary measures taken in EU Member States. This includes information on the working and contact of civil courts (family law courts included), and Central Authorities dealing with parental obligations, civil law aspects of cross-border child abduction and maintenance, as well as information on procedural matters such as legal deadlines and the obtaining of legal aid. The information will continue to be updated to reflect the developments in the Member States.
	Information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on criminal justice and judicial cooperation in the Union has been published on the pages of the European e-Justice Portal. This information provides an overview on (temporary) measures taken in EU Member States. This includes information, which may be relevant also for children, on procedural rights of suspects and accused persons in criminal proceedings, victims of crime (with a particular attention to victims of domestic violence, including children), the situation in prisons and probation. The information will continue to be updated to reflect further developments.
Digital environment, education, support for parents	Under the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children, the EU funds the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) portal that is a pan-European hub with online resources gathered from the Safer Internet Centres all over the Europe. The resource gallery has more than 1 300 educational, creative and fun items in different European languages, for schools and families. During the COVID-19 pandemic the portal has a special focus on how confinement and the increased use of the internet and digital tools is affecting us. Topics include examples of positive use of technology, how and why we should stay alert to scams, and how industry stakeholders are working together to fight COVID-19 disinformation. The portal is also a gateway to national Safer Internet Centres with localised help and advice for parents and carers as well as more resources for kids. The March edition of the Better Internet for Kids bulletin, also available on the BIK portal, gives tips on online safety

	and learning and how to discuss the pandemic with your kids.
	HappyOnlife, is a video game produced by the JRC (Joint Research Centre). The game gives children the opportunity to reflect on their online behaviour, to strengthen awareness about their rights online, and on how to mitigate the online risks and seize the opportunities of the digital world. The game helps adults to actively guide children to be smart, responsible, and respectful when using digital technologies. The HappyOnlife toolkit was first developed in 2015, with four quiz categories: "Stop online bullying!"; "Let's chat!"; "Watch-Out!"; and "Playsafely". With the rapidly changing online landscape, HappyOnlife 2 provides new, fresh content that keeps the game up-to-date and supports continuous learning and improved digital awareness for both children and adults. The quiz questions were optimised through participatory research. The questions selected for the game are those shown to be relevant and understandable to the main target group of 8-12 year-olds.
Digital environment: safety, child sexual abuse	Special section on COVID-19: CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION was created by Europol. Main topics are: What is different during the COVID-19 pandemic? What can I do as a parent? What can I do as a carer/teacher? How do I talk to children about being safe online? A guide on online safety is addressed to parents and carers, on how to support and guide your children to avoid online risks and have safer time online. Threats and trends in general in relation to COVID-19: a) Regularly updated and collected: https://www.europol.europa.eu/staying-safe-during-covid-19-what-you-need-to-know b) Europol's report (for children safety see pages 7-9), https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/catching-virus-cybercrime-disinformation-and-covid-19-pandemic press releases from the EU MS: - https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/international-police-cooperation-leads-to-arrest-of-dark-web-child-sex-abuser-in-spain (released 21 April 2020), - https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/90-suspects-identified-in-major-online-child-sexual-abuse-operation (released 31 March 2020), - https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/dark-web-child-abuse-administrator-of-darkscandals-arrested-in-netherlands (released 12 March 2020).
Education, play, information	**Learning Corner** offers free **online materials** about the EU for the 5-18 year olds, their teachers, and parents. These include games, videos, and learning materials on the EU, that are available in all 24 EU official languages, and help (re)discover the EU also in a fun way, in a virtual classroom or at home.

Education	**Language development and support for multilingual children** The European Commission is collaborating with the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, specifically within the project support for multilingual classrooms but also more generally, for example in the field of early language learning. The Centre has recently published a "treasure chest" of resources for learners or teachers struggling with language teaching on-line, and for parents trying to support their children's language development at home. Case studies and innovative practices in this field are also analysed in the new NESET report The future of language education, (publication is imminent). **School Education Gateway** Presented in 23 European languages and funded by Erasmus+, the School Education Gateway is an online platform to support teachers, school leaders, researchers, teacher educators, policymakers, and other professionals working in school education. It regularly publishes news, expert articles, resources (including teaching materials from European projects), and video interviews, as well as hosts MOOCs and webinars via its 'Teacher Academy'. Those participating in online courses and webinars naturally become more familiar with online learning and can then apply similar approaches and tools in their own practice. Teacher Academy also offers a mini-course "Five Strategies for Learning Online" that helps teachers become more familiar with processes and tools. During the current period of school closure, the School Education Gateway is increasing its efforts to support educators and school education systems with: • articles • a tutorial on online teaching • a survey on online teaching and learning, to gather the experiences of teachers and school leaders, and other stakeholders, across Europe • an updated calendar of relevant online training and information events, including those developed for the eTwinning community **eTwinning** eTwinning is a vibrant learning community of teachers and schools across Europe. The eTwinning platform has a wide range of tools to support online learning, digital and other competences, virtual mobility, and remote professional development. It is funded by Erasmus+ and is presented in 30 languages. It offers teachers and pupils a safe online space for collaborative projects with each other and with other schools. Teachers registered in eTwinning have started to launch new projects, set up online events and networking groups to

	share and exchange about distance learning methodologies and experiences. The platform is currently collecting practice from the field that will be shared in the community and published on the website. **Policy cooperation** A number of meetings have taken place in the past two weeks where representatives of Ministries of Education have shared the strategic approaches they have taken. As well as revealing the similarity of approaches and challenges, this peer learning has been inspiring for policy makers. A **new online Distance Learning Group** has been established for national and regional representatives to continue these discussions. The updated **Digital Education Action Plan** will include actions dedicated to a longer-term development of competences and resources for flexible, on-line and distance education, and wider capacity of schools and teachers to reap the benefits of digital tools for teaching and learning. The **SIRIUS network** – the European Policy Network on Migrant Education – has published a collection of practices that their partners have reported to ensure access to effective and inclusive education (which is related to the right to education) under the current circumstances among the most vulnerable.
Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps	**Erasmus+ programme and European Solidarity Corps** The Commission has created a special webpage for students, pupils, volunteers and other participants in the Erasmus+ programme and European Solidarity Corps. It gives information on how coronavirus is affecting activities, what changes are taking place, and what help is available. Young people can find additional information on the European Youth portal, including specific impact on youth-related activities and programmes. In the current situation, European Solidarity Corps participants are ready to help where possible (within the context of the health and safety measures imposed by each Member State). There are a number of touching and concrete examples in this respect. Whether doing grocery shopping, sewing masks or creating online educational materials for children, these young people are determined to take up challenges and support those in need.
Child poverty, early childhood education and care,	In the Covid-19 refocus of the **2020 European Semester**, country specific recommendations to support employment and incomes on social policies are all relevant for preventing a steep rise in **child poverty.** Also SURE and CRII contribute to this. The Semester process dedicated some focus to the social condition of women and **single parents** to prevent a rise in child poverty.

	In the wake of the crisis it is the most concerning challenge and **access to affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) of good quality** in second place. Good quality, ECEC is important in levelling the playing field and improving life cycle outcomes for disadvantaged children. With the school lockdown, parents of vulnerable children could run into arrears to pay for their **general education**. Further, attempts to continue school via distance learning for those unable to afford the required IT, for classes and receiving school materials, will face comparative disadvantage. Moreover, many reliant on **school meal programmes** would have been cut-off and now unsure of their next meal. On the whole, the Covid-19 crisis will be harmful for some children, amplifying existing inequalities in our societies and affecting most those children already in need. The **Child Guarantee**, scheduled for 2021, will focus on improving access, for children in need, to essential services such as food, health, education, housing and ECEC. The main aim of the Child Guarantee is to trigger the Member States to step-up efforts to ensure that no child is left behind. The Child Guarantee can thereby mitigate the impact on children of the Covid-19 crisis. Already now, the Commission is helping with **funding**. COVID-19 support measures are going to play a key role in the upcoming 2021-29 programmes of the European Structural and Investment Funds. In particular, the new ESF+ is expected to provide support to the Child Guarantee initiative. The **benchmarking framework on ECEC and support to children** being developed by the Commission with the steer of Social Protection Committee Indicator Sub-Group will be an essential tool in monitoring developments. The **Youth Guarantee** can alleviate the impact of the economic crisis on young people's employment by supporting them to make the most of the opportunities available in the labour market. In terms of crisis mitigation, the Youth Guarantee framework can be used to support the short-term employability of young people through a number of measures (not necessarily youth-specific): temporary short-time working arrangements, wage subsidies and self-employment. Lastly, since early leavers and low-skilled young people are at particular risk of becoming longer-term NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), young people should be prevented from leaving education and training early and those who have left prematurely should be brought back to education or training.
Fundamental rights	In April, FRA published the Agency's first bulletin on the impact of responses to the COVID-19 pandemic on fundamental rights. This bulletin covers the period 1 February – 20 March 2020, during which the 27 Member States adopted the initial wave of measures to address the public health crisis caused by the pandemic. Related to child rights, part 1 'Impact on Daily life' includes information on EU member states' measures concerning education (page 18), and part 2 'Impact on particular groups in society' (page 25), especially the section on "women and children at risk of domestic violence" (page 32). The report addresses also the situation of parents of children with disabilities (page 27) and the increase in racist and xenophobic incidents experienced also by children (page 33).

	At this page, you can find all FRA activities related to the impact of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on fundamental rights in the EU.
Roma children, funding	The instruments proposed by the Commission as an immediate response to the crisis can offer support to vulnerable groups such as Roma. The Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) and the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+) enable the rapid mobilisation of available allocations under the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). The EU Solidarity Fund will provide additional assistance of up to €800 million to the worst affected countries in order to alleviate the financial burden of the immediate response measures. **A letter to the relevant Ministers** was sent on behalf of the Commission, a in each MS emphasising the need for specific measures for vulnerable groups, including Roma, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. They drew attention to the importance of food and water availability and the delivery of key sanitation products and medicines to all. The letter pointed to the pre-existing racial inequalities, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and recommended the wide dissemination of information to both Roma and the majority population to avoid further hate spread. In response to the crisis, DG JUST updated the evaluation guidance to external experts assessing the proposals under the REC programme (targeted priority on strengthening the fight against anti-gypsyism and various forms of discrimination of Roma (Call ID: REC-AG-2020) targeting Roma to give **priority to projects that have included COVID-mitigating activities** (supporting access to digital learning, fighting negative discourses on Roma in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic)
Anti-trafficking	The deadline for the ISF call for proposals on actions against trafficking in human beings is extended until 27 August 2020: DG HOME - call for proposals under the Internal Security Fund – Police on "Joint Action against Trafficking in Human Beings addressing the Culture of Impunity" See more on that in a separate post in this Newsletter
Border control	All EU Member States (except Ireland) and all Schengen Associated Countries have now applied the travel restriction. The Commission issued on 30 March **practical guidance** to assist border guards and visa authorities in implementing the temporary restriction at the external EU borders. The guidance also aims to facilitate transit arrangements for the repatriation of EU citizens, and provides advice on visa and security issues. The Commission is working on a guidance document on the implementation of the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU.

Relocation of unaccompanied children from Greece / humanitarian crisis on the Greek islands	The preparations for the voluntary relocation of up to 1,600 unaccompanied minors and vulnerable children with families from the Greek islands are progressing, in spite of the additional challenges due to the coronavirus crisis. To date, ten Member States (namely Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Luxembourg, and Lithuania) and Switzerland committed at political level to this voluntary relocation effort. The first relocations, of 12 unaccompanied minors to Luxembourg and of 47 minors to Germany, have already taken place successfully and in full safety. In parallel, the Greek authorities are preparing the transfer to the mainland of up to 2,000 vulnerable asylum applicants from the overcrowded reception centers on the islands. EASO and UN agencies support the transfer logistically and the Commission support the operation financially. The Commission also continues to provide extensive financial support to Greece to improve the conditions on the islands. This includes health care, with our funding supporting the deployments of doctors and other medical staff in the hotspots and a substantial amount of medical equipment. On top of the significant funding we have provided to Greece for managing migration (€2.42 billion since 2015), the Commission recently made immediately available additional €700 million.
Asylum	The European Commission adopted on 16 April 2020 Guidance on the application of asylum rules during the COVID-19 crisis (OJ C 126, 17.4.2020). The Guidance aims to provide the required flexibility in the application of the EU asylum rules during the coronavirus crisis while at the same time preserving the fundamental rights of asylum applicants.