**Representative’s Report 2021-2022**

**Name of the Organisation: Eurochild**

**Name of the Representative: Anna Deneher**

**Background:**

Eurochild is a network of 191 organisations and individuals from 35 countries working with and for children in Europe striving for a society that respects the rights of children. It advocates for children’s rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking. Eurochild works closely with the European Union, as protecting children’s rights is among the EU’s aims and values and its work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Eurochild’s strategic goals are to end child poverty and social isolation, to end institutional care for children and to put in place comprehensive early childhood development policies for all children in Europe.

I was nominated as IFSW Europe’s representative to Eurochild at the Delegates’ Meeting on 7th November 2020, and IFSW membership was formally accepted in June 2021.

**Activities 2021/2022**

European Child Guarantee.

An important element of Eurochild policy is the European Child Guarantee. In June 2021, European Member States unanimously adopted the Council Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee following demands by [Eurochild and its members](https://www.eurochild.org/resource/eurochilds-response-to-the-european-child-guarantee/). This initiative guarantees children in need access to a set of key services to prevent and combat poverty and social exclusion. Member States had until March 2022 to submit their National Action Plans outlining how they will implement this recommendation up to 2030. As EU Members submit their action plans, Eurochild shares highlights from each plan which members and children’s rights advocates can use in their own work to ensure that children’s rights remain high on the agenda in Europe.

Despite the March deadline and the commitment to eradicate poverty by 2030, only 15 Member States have submitted their CG National Action Plans so far (Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden). The remaining 11 countries have still to submit their plans. As IFSW Europe members, we can call upon those governments with outstanding plan to submit them.

Children in Alternative Care

I have joined this thematic group which aims to prioritise and support deinstitutionalization for children in alternative care as well as children in aftercare. A series of capacity building webinars have been held on subjects such as the way forward towards family-based care for children, how child protection systems can benefit from NGOs and social housing for care leavers. The group shares good practice for facilitating mutual learning and informing decision makers at both national and European level. Upcoming webinars on children with disabilities in foster care and the use of EU funds in the transition from institutional care to community-based services are being held in November 2022.

Datacare Project:

This project was launched by Eurochild with support from UNICEF in 2020. Over the past two years, Eurochild has worked with members, UNICEF and national correspondents to map how EU Member states and the UK currently collect data on child protection and the situation of children in alternative care. The project also aims to inform EU efforts to agree comparable benchmarks and indicators to monitor progress in child protection reforms across Europe, including progress on deinstitutionalisation in Europe.

As part of this project, a funding extension has been agreed with UNICEF to continue advocating for improvements in data collection for Children in Alternative Care through the Child Guarantee. Part of this will include analysing NAPs to assess whether indicators on care reform are included or actions are planned on data improvement.

Child Participation:

Eurochild wants to lead by example and is committed to supporting the direct involvement of children and young people in its work through the Eurochild Children’s Council, National Eurochild Forums and a Child Participation Reference Group. Eurochild also supports others, including the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Fundamental Rights Agency to engage directly with children.

Eurochild’s response to the war in Ukraine:

Since March 2022, Eurochild has organised regular ‘Open Spaces for Solidarity’ with members to exchange information, highlight challenges and identify key messages for policy makers. Eurochild is planning on funding and developing work and projects that involve deinstitutionalisation and child protection system reform in Ukraine.

**Key achievements for IFSW Europe**

* It is an important step for IFSW Europe to be represented on Eurochild and to bring the voice of social work to the area of policy development in the area of children’s rights and child protection in Europe.
* Ana Radalescu represented IFSW Europe at a joint Eurochild and IFSW Europe training for social workers in Lviv City Council, Ukraine on 29th September 2022. Eurochild presented the European approach to eradicate institutional care for children. Ana presented on the work of IFSW Europe on the ground in Kamianets- Podiliskyi, Ukraine
* Alongside Eurochild, I represented IFSW Europe at the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on the Rights and Best Interests of the Child in Parental Separation and in Care Proceedings event on 3rd October held in Dublin. The event was a Hearing of Stakeholders and was held in the form of an exchange of views among participants with a view to providing further input to the elaboration of the draft recommendation to Member States on this important topic.

**Challenges:**

* Due to COVID 19 restrictions it has been a difficult time to join the organisation, as all events and meetings so far have been held online thus making it more difficult to develop the personal working relationships fostered by face -to face interactions. However the virtual meetings have enabled positive engagement has contributed to my understanding of the operation of Eurochild . The next General Assembly is planned for May 2023 and will be held in person in Brussels.
* Many of the projects and requests for input /feedback are country-specific and feedback is required from a national perspective as many members are national organisations, which is not relevant to IFSW Europe.

**Upcoming Events:**

Extraordinary General Assembly on 16th November 2022

Webinar on Children with Disabilities in Foster Care 22nd November 2002

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Anna Deneher

IFSW Representative to Eurochild

October 2022