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# Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)

## Opinion by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) on PACE Recommendation 2216 (2021) on the "Best interests of the child and policies to ensure a work-life balance"

Opinion adopted by the CDENF during its plenary session (Strasbourg, 1-3 February 2022)

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**Opinion by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)**

**on Recommendation 2216(2021) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on the "Best interests of the child and policies to ensure a work-life balance"**

1. Following the adoption on 26 November 2021 of Recommendation 2216 (2021) on the "Best interests of the child and policies to ensure a work-life balance" by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe ("PACE"), the Committee of Ministers adopted the decision, at its 1420th meeting on 8 December 2021, "*to communicate it […] to the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF), for information and possible comments by 25 February 2022"*.

2. The present opinion has first been examined by the CDENF Bureau at its 7th meeting (on 19 January 2022), and then submitted to and approved by the CDENF at a plenary session held in an online format on 1-3 February 2022.

3. The CDENF approved the **following opinion**, to be shared with the Committee of Ministers, starting with some general remarks, followed by observations addressing the content of specific paragraphs of the Recommendation.

4. The CDENF warmly welcomes the fact that the PACE has drawn attention to the importance of protecting the best interests of the child in designing policies to ensure a work-life balance. Indeed, the CDENF recalls that, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its article 3, the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies.

5. The CDENF acknowledges the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated child poverty and social exclusion as families have faced a new wave of unemployment and income insecurity. In this context, the CDENF fully shares the views presented by PACE and has itself encouraged Governments to ensure that children's well-being and equal access to rights are prioritised. The CDENF collected examples of good practices in response to the pandemic and published these on a website dedicated to children's rights during the Covid-19 pandemic. Substantive exchanges between CDENF Delegations, participants, observers and invited experts were held through three webinars on specific issues related relating to "Covid-19 and children's rights" in 2021 (education, mental health, intrafamily violence).

6. The CDENF takes note of the specific invitation by the PACE (in paragraph 5.1. of the Recommendation) to "incorporate issues linked to the policy for the first 1 000 days into the next strategy for the rights of the child and its ground-breaking work on the roots of poverty". The current draft Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) was already finalised and approved by the CDENF on 15 October 2021; thus prior to the adoption of PACE Recommendation 2216(2021). Under its second strategic objective, the draft Strategy is expected to continue focusing on "equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children" in order to leave no child behind and to contribute to breaking cycles of disadvantage for children from an early age onwards.

7. The PACE also recommends that the Committee of Ministers consider "[helping] the member States to prepare national strategies on early childhood, promote good practices and foster exchanges of information between the authorities running these national strategies". Under its terms of reference, the CDENF is committed to facilitating regular exchanges of knowledge, good practices and experiences among member States in the areas covered by the upcoming Strategy, and contributing to the achievement of, and review of progress towards, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regards to Goal 1: No poverty. The CDENF takes due note of the importance that the PACE attaches to early childhood as an important stage of development of children and will bear this in mind in view of its future activities.