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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

CDENF(2022)22FINAL

23 August 2022

Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)

Opinion by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) on PACE Recommendation 2234(2022) on “Eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe: an international obligation and a moral duty”

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

on Recommendation 2234(2022) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on “Eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe: an international obligation and a moral duty”

1. Following the adoption on 31 May 2022 of [Recommendation 2234\(2022\) on “Eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe: an international obligation and a moral duty”](#) by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (“PACE”), the Committee of Ministers adopted the decision, [at its 1437th meeting on 15 June 2022](#), “*to communicate it to the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) [...] for information and possible comments by 15 September 2022*”.
2. The CDENF, having examined the Recommendation at its 5th Plenary meeting (4-6 July 2022), adopted in written proceedings the following comments concerning those aspects of PACE Recommendation 2234(2022) which fall under the scope of its mandate.
3. The CDENF welcomes the fact that the PACE draws attention to child poverty levels remaining high in Council of Europe member States, notably following further increases during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, the CDENF recalls that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognises the right of every child to an adequate standard of living for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development, while the European Social Charter guarantees the right of the child to appropriate social, legal and economic protection.
4. The role of the Council of Europe in the area of child poverty had already been underlined in a 2019 report prepared by the Department of Social Rights and supported by the Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF) - predecessor committee of the CDENF. This report, entitled “[Protecting the Child from Poverty: The Role of Rights in the Council of Europe](#)” had been presented at the Conference for the Mid-term evaluation of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) in November 2019.
5. The CDENF acknowledges the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated child poverty and social exclusion as families have started facing a new wave of unemployment and income insecurity. In this context, the CDENF itself encourages governments to ensure that children’s well-being and equal access to rights are prioritised, even during a public health crisis, as recognised in the [Strategy](#)’s innovating objective 2.2.4 focused on “Analysing new challenges that have emerged due to COVID-19 for children in vulnerable situations ([...] increased poverty, etc.)”. 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. In 2021, substantive exchanges between CDENF Delegations, participants, observers and invited experts were held through three webinars on specific challenges related to “Covid-19 and children’s rights” (education, mental health and intrafamily violence).
6. The CDENF takes note of the specific invitation by the PACE (in paragraph 2 of the Recommendation) to “monitor the development and implementation of national strategies for preventing and combating child poverty”. Under its terms of reference, the CDENF is committed to contribute to the achievement of, and review progress towards, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including with regards to “Goal 1: No poverty and Goal 10: Reduce inequality” and to oversee the implementation of the Strategy for the Rights of the

Child (2022-2027), notably through a mid-term evaluation conference in 2024/2025 and implementation reports prepared every two years.

7. The [Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\)](#) includes an anti-discrimination approach throughout the Strategy to ensure that children in situations of vulnerability, including children living in poverty, are protected against all forms of discrimination. More concretely, its second priority area is fully dedicated to “Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children”, highlighting that social exclusion, child poverty and lack of equal access to quality education are main obstacles to ensuring children’s access to equal opportunities. It also recognises that children in difficult economic situations or living in poverty face the additional barriers of having their rights respected. Accordingly, its innovating objective 2.2.1 is focused on “Addressing the root causes of child poverty, preventing situations of extreme child poverty, while trying to mitigate the outcomes, as well as tackling poverty caused by environmental degradation and conflict”, objective 2.2.2 is committed to “Supporting member States in making existing institutions and services attentive and reactive to situations of child poverty and exclusion, including through systematic child impact assessments and through supporting families, to avoid child-family separation”, while objective 2.2.3 foresees “Encouraging States to improve disaggregated data collection on poverty and monitor the impact of anti-poverty measures”. Whilst such action will be supported from the European level as possible, the Council of Europe will notably invite member States to keep the issues of child poverty and social exclusion high up on national agendas.

8. Moreover, the PACE recommends that the Committee of Ministers consider “encouraging Council of Europe member States to make children’s best interests and well-being the focus of public policies to combat extreme poverty by 2030” (in paragraph 3.3 of the Recommendation). It is relevant to outline that the Strategy was designed to uphold the best interests of the child in every setting. In particular, the second priority area is designed to ensure that children’s best interests are upheld and that all children have access to the same means and services to achieve the best attainable standard of living, irrespective of their economic situation, in order to leave no child behind and to contribute to breaking cycles of disadvantage for children. In the framework of the CDENF, these challenges will in particular be addressed through activities on children in migration, child participation in health-related decisions and children’s access to mental health services, as well as, in the next biennium, on the rights of children living in residential institutions.

8. Lastly, the PACE also recommends that the Committee of Ministers consider “supporting efforts to ensure that children’s voices are heard when introducing policies to combat extreme poverty” (in paragraph 3.4 of the Recommendation). Indeed, the Committee recalls that the Council of Europe has historically demonstrated leadership in giving a voice to and involving children and giving due respect to their views in its standard-setting, monitoring and co-operation projects. Therefore, under the implementing and innovating objectives noted in its fifth strategic objective, the Strategy focuses on “giving a voice to every child”, including during the development of national policies to combat poverty. The CDENF will continue to promote child participation through its activities, including by supporting other sectors of the organisation engaging with children.

Annex

Recommendation 2234 (2022)¹

Eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe: an international obligation and a moral duty

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its [Resolution 2442\(2022\)](#) “Eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe: an international obligation and a moral duty”. Child poverty is far from being eradicated in Europe. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has started to increase again after decades of improvement in the situation. The Assembly proposes to use the momentum from the Covid-19 pandemic to rekindle the original global goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030.

2. The Assembly congratulates the Committee of Ministers on continuing its efforts and retaining the fight against extreme child poverty among the objectives of the new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) and invites it to monitor the development and implementation of national strategies for preventing and combating child poverty.

3. The Assembly supports the action taken by the European Union regarding the implementation of the European Child Guarantee. It calls on the Committee of Ministers to support this initiative by:

3.1 taking into account the urgency of addressing extreme child poverty in order to eradicate it by 2030, in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 1.2;

3.2 contributing as far as possible to the European Union’s Europe-wide work, including by supporting the establishment of a network of national co-ordinators and in the context of joint co-operation projects;

3.3 encouraging Council of Europe member States to make children’s best interests and well-being the focus of public policies to combat extreme poverty by 2030;

3.4 supporting efforts to ensure that children’s voices are heard when introducing policies to combat extreme poverty.

4. The Assembly reiterates its call to the Committee of Ministers to advocate the opening of negotiations as soon as possible on the European Union’s accession to the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163) in order to enhance the consistency of European socio-economic rights standards.

standards.

¹ Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 31 May 2022 (see Doc. 15524, report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Mr Pierre-Alain Fridez).