



Helsingissä 25.9.2013

**Arvoisa pääministeri Jyrki Katainen,**

Nykyinen taloustilanne Euroopassa vaikuttaa erityisen voimakkaasti lapsiin ja lapsiperheisiin ja vaikutukset ovat nähtävissä vasta pitkälti tulevaisuudessa. Siksi pyydämmekin että varmistatte, että tulevassa EU:n budjettiraamissa huomioidaan seuraavat asiat:

- EU-budjettiin 2014-2020 varataan rahoitusta ohjelmille, jotka investoivat lapsiin
- EU:n rakennerahastot auttavat nostamaan lapsia köyhyydestä ja edistävät sosiaalista osallisuutta
- Riittävästi varoja ohjataan perusoikeuksien ja kansalaisuuden edistämiseen, mukaan lukien lasten oikeuksiin ja lasten suojeluun
- Lapset ovat EU:n kehitysyhteistyön erityinen prioriteetti, sillä lasten asemaa parantamalla vähennetään köyhyyttä ja saavutetaan kestäviä tuloksia

Kunnioittavasti,

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### **Invest in Children through the EU Budget 2014-2020**

Discussions on the next long-term EU budget 2014-2020 are soon reaching their end after an intense two-year negotiation period.

Recognising the political challenges in agreement of a political compromise, organisations active in the Children's Rights Action Group (CRAG), a partnership of international NGOs working to protect and promote children's rights, urge Members of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union to:

- Adopt an EU budget 2014-2020 with funding programmes that improve investment in children
- Under Heading 1: EU structural funds should help to lift children out of poverty and promote social inclusion
- Under Heading 3: sufficient funds must go to promoting fundamental rights and citizenship, including children's rights and child protection
- Under Heading 4: at least 90% of the budget must go towards development aid and children should be a specific priority for programming so as to have a lasting impact on poverty eradication

Children and families are being disproportionately affected by the current economic, financial and social crisis. The EU's long-term budget 2014-2020 (MFF) provides a crucial opportunity to rebuild trust in the European Union. In this regard, child rights NGOs acknowledge the immense value of having reached a political agreement on the overall MFF in due time in July 2013. However, the agreed resources are fewer than initially foreseen, making the investment priorities of the coming years even more important. These need to be further established together with civil society organisations who act as strategic partners. Such partnership principles should be effective, meaningful and mandatory.

Investment in children makes sense – economically, socially and politically. It is the only sustainable way of overcoming social and economic inequalities in the long term. It also means acting upon existing obligations to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Lisbon Treaty which explicitly sets the objective to promote children's rights in internal and external EU affairs.

To allow timely implementation of the EU budget as of January 2014, it is of paramount importance to adopt the overall MFF and all sector-specific funding programmes in due time. Children's rights are threatened daily by the lack of access to adequate protection, healthcare, housing, education, nourishment or family support both in the European Union as well as globally. This situation is exacerbated by the continued contraction of the social sector spending and austerity measures introduced with too little regard to the long-term impact on future generations. Without appropriate support, the development of millions of children may be irreversibly compromised, which, in its turn, will limit their potential to contribute to the economy and society in the future.

Therefore, children's rights organisations call on Members of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union to ensure that:

**1. Investment of EU resources goes to promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, in particular child poverty, through the EU Structural Funds under the MFF's Heading 1:**

More than one in four children lives at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU. As the second largest piece of EU expenditure, Member States must ensure that cohesion policy instruments contribute to realising the EU goal of fighting child poverty and promoting child well-being, as showcased in the European Commission Recommendation Investing in Children (2013). A guaranteed minimum share to the European Social Fund of at least 25% and within it to social inclusion of at least 20% is essential to proceed on Europe 2020 poverty target, in particular on the reduction of child poverty.

**2. Sufficient levels of funding go to the promotion of fundamental rights and citizenship, including children's rights and child protection under the MFF's Heading 3:**

Promoting fundamental rights and European citizenship is an incremental process that demands sustainable and long-term action. The EU has enormous potential to contribute to the respect, protection, promotion and fulfilment of fundamental rights. Heading 3 specifically provides important opportunities to meet the EU obligations and commitments in this area. We urge you to ensure that these are matched with adequate funding and efficient (effective) instruments under Heading 3.

**3. Development aid is at least 90% of Heading 4 and that children are a priority for programming so as to have a true impact on poverty eradication:**

Half of the population in developing countries are children. It is estimated that maternal and new-born deaths lead to global productivity losses of USD 15 billion each year. The EU must invest in children to ensure that the



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goal of poverty eradication and other aims of development cooperation are achieved. The degree to which funding for development prioritises children will not only determine how much impact the EU will have in the efforts to eradicate poverty, but also how strong the EU will be as a global policy maker and promoter of equality, human rights and good governance.

We count on you not to leave the most vulnerable in society behind. The economic and financial crisis should not detract attention away from the core purpose of EU funds: to add value to Member State action, to fulfill EU responsibilities, and to ensure quality of spending. **Better and more efficient spending can be achieved through investment in children, and will have immediate and lasting impacts on the whole of society.**

We remain hopeful that the EU will adopt financial instruments and levels of funding that make a difference for children.