

Press release – Children's rights: combatting exploitation, forced marriage and sexual abuse



Following the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November, the European Parliament adopted a resolution, assessing the many challenges that children and youth face today. The text was approved by 495 votes in favour, 58 against and 87 abstentions on Tuesday.

Vulnerable children, children in migration

MEPs condemn all forms of violence against children, including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, trafficking, psychological violence and urge all EU countries to work on new strategies to eradicate sexual violence and child abuse both online and offline. They also call on member states to uphold legislation penalising the corporal punishment of kids.

The resolution calls for the Common European Asylum System to be fully implemented to improve conditions for children in migration. The best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in all decisions concerning children and migration. In particular, child protection should be the leading principle when dealing with unaccompanied children, rather than migration policies, says the text.

Children in armed conflicts, statelessness, inclusive education

Some children continue to be born stateless, including in the EU, and MEPs call on the countries concerned to address these problems. They also highlight, among others, children with disabilities, migrant backgrounds, children of LGBTI parents, those with imprisoned parents and children of so-called “foreign fighters” as disproportionately exposed to discrimination on multiple grounds.

Concerning children of foreign terrorist fighters held in north-east Syria, the resolution urges all EU countries to repatriate all kids with EU nationalities, taking into account their specific family situation.

The Parliament also calls on all EU countries to guarantee all children the right to an inclusive education, including age-appropriate information about sex and sexuality.

Kids, drivers of change

On a positive note, the resolution highlights the significant role children can play in shaping the political agenda as illustrated by the recent mobilisation against climate change led by young people. It finally urges all countries that have not yet ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its additional protocols to do so as a matter of urgency.

Background

[This United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) has become the [most widely](#) ratified human rights treaty in history. The European Parliament organised [a high-level conference](#) on 20 November to mark its 30th anniversary, attended by, among others, Her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians.