

## **Annual Report 2023 and Work Programme for end of legislative term 2019-2024 of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights<sup>1</sup>**

**Mrs Ewa Kopacz**  
**Vice President of the European Parliament**

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<sup>1</sup> The annual report contains planning for the work of the EP Coordinator until the end of term (July 2024).

## **Summary of the EP Coordinator's on Children's Rights work in 2023 within the statutory activities - main initiatives**

### **Act as central contact point to monitor and actively promote children's rights in EU policies, ensuring coherence and visibility of Parliament's actions in this area**

- ✓ Russian aggression on Ukraine - focus on children from the institutions and children forcibly deported to Russia and Belarus
- ✓ Child poverty - European Child Guarantee and child protection
- ✓ Child participation in practice
- ✓ Young carers
- ✓ Health - physical & mental health of children

### **Act in the field of international child abduction, cross-border family issues and child friendly justice**

- ✓ Protection of children and cooperation in respect of intercountry adoption
- ✓ Participation in events and conferences on parental child abduction
- ✓ Promoting child-friendly justice
- ✓ Promoting cross-border mediation and encouraging and informing individual enquirers on the possible use of mediation in their particular cases

### **Be a central information point for citizens of the Member States in international parental child abduction or other cross-border family disputes**

- ✓ Dealt with almost 50 enquires coming from the citizens concerning cross-border child related issues, including interventions at the diplomatic level
- ✓ Addressed the systematic breaches of EU and international rules concerning cross-border family matters

## **Background**

The obligation to protect and promote children's rights is enshrined in Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which all Member States ratified. Published in March 2021, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child presents a detailed and comprehensive roadmap for steps to take at both Union and Member State level to protect and promote children's rights across the European Union and beyond.

The European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights mandate was established by a decision of the Bureau in 2018 to enable Parliament to have a comprehensive and coordinated approach on issues affecting children through the creation of a single point of contact both within the Parliament and externally in Parliament's work on children's rights. The position itself evolved from the European Parliament Mediator for International Child Abduction. The Coordinator remains a central contact point in the Parliament on parental child abduction and cross-border family matters, thereby keeping the link with its historical mandate and her particular relations with the Committee on Legal Affairs.

In July 2019, President David Maria Sassoli appointed Vice President Ewa Kopacz to the position of EP Coordinator on Children's Rights. In January 2022, Ewa Kopacz was re-elected as a Vice President of the European Parliament and requested by President Roberta Metsola to continue in the role of EP Coordinator on Children's Rights until the end of the parliamentary term 2019-2024.

The Coordinator presented her final Annual Report 2023 and the Work Programme for 2024 to the Committee on Legal Affairs on 19 March 2024.

As Vice President Ewa Kopacz term as EP Coordinator on Children's Rights ends in July 2024, this report presents a summary of the main activities and achievements of 2023 and the work programme for 2024 reflecting the main responsibilities within the EP Coordinator's mandate. Additionally and in view of the commitment stated in the previous 2022 Annual Report, this paper includes the revised mandate of the EP Coordinator on the Children's Rights and the Office for the 2024-2029 parliamentary term, as endorsed by the EP Bureau meeting of 20 November 2023 following the recommendations presented by the current EP Coordinator.

**Heading I. Coordination of the EP activities in the field of children's rights.**

**Heading II. International child abduction and other cross-border family disputes.**

**Heading III. Revised mandate of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights**

# **I. Coordination of the EP activities in the field of children's rights**

## **2023 activities summary**

As in 2022, the ongoing war in Ukraine shaped the activities of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights. Cooperation with parliamentary committees and individual Members intensified this year on issues related to the well-being of Ukrainian children, their safety, health, education and future. In April at the invitation of Ms Oksana Zholnovych, Minister for Social Policy of Ukraine, Vice President and EP Coordinator on Children's Rights Ewa Kopacz attended the first joint interinstitutional mission of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council Presidency to Ukraine following the full-scale aggression of Russia. The joint mission focused on the issues related to the reform of the child protection system in Ukraine and the ongoing challenges that children in Ukraine face in view of Russian invasion, including the forced deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia and Belarus. Alongside this, the EP Coordinator addressed throughout 2023 the number of issues related to protection and safeguarding rights of Ukrainian children, including those who fled with family members or unaccompanied to European Union.

At the same time, the EP Coordinator continued to focus her attention on other important topics in the area of child rights guided by the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child of March 2021. The EP Coordinator engaged in work on cross-border family law issues, child - friendly justice, child participation in democratic life, child poverty, and the mental and physical health of children. This engagement brought cooperation with a number of parliamentary committees, EU institutions and relevant stakeholders and this summary is to present the diversity of this collaboration.

### ***Horizontal cooperation on issues related to situation of Ukrainian children***

- On 20 April at the invitation of Ms Oksana Zholnovych, Minister for Social Policy of Ukraine, the first joint interinstitutional mission of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council to Ukraine following the full-scale aggression of Russia took place in Kyiv<sup>2</sup>. The focus of this mission was twofold, to understand the impact and effects (current and future) of the war on Ukrainian children and to share knowledge on child protection systems in line with global best practice. Vice President and EP Coordinator Ewa Kopacz was representing the European Parliament and together with Vice President of the European Commission for Democracy and Demography Dubravka Šuica and Camilla Waltersson Grönvall, Swedish Minister of Social Services, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, led

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<sup>2</sup> For summary of the meetings during the joint interinstitutional mission to Kyiv please consult Annex I.

the delegation in extensive discussions with Ukrainian counterparts. The delegation heard about the key issues and challenges as a result of the Russian aggression in Ukraine on the lives of children, including the impact of the war on their mental and physical health and wellbeing, their access to education and essential services including childcare and child support services. The discussions also included the future reform of the child protection system and the departure from large institutional care settings towards family and community based care for children. Many discussions focused around the concern for children illegally deported or retained in Russia or in occupied territories, and the urgency in seeking their return. The delegation was supported, including in situ, by a member of the EP Coordinator's Office.

- On 22 March 2023, the EP Coordinator met with Ms Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to discuss the situation of children in Ukraine and the effects of conflict on children globally. The discussion focused on the situation of Ukrainian children forcibly deported to Russia and Belarus and detained in occupied territories and on the cooperation of the SRSG CAC with both Ukraine and Russia to guarantee the protection of children during the conflict. The Office established cooperation with the SRSG CAC regional office in Brussels at the working level.
- On 6 September 2023, the EP Coordinator and the Office organised the meeting with Mr Knut Dörmann, Head of Delegation to the EU, NATO and the Kingdom of Belgium of the International Committee of the Red Cross to discuss the engagement of the ICRC in seeking the return of Ukrainian children forcibly deported to Russia or retained in occupied territories and on the situation of missing persons, including children, as a consequence of the conflict in Ukraine. The meeting and further communication with ICRC were organised in collaboration with Vice Chair of the Committee of Culture and Education Ms Michaela Šojdrova.
- European Parliament resolution of 15 June 2023 on *Torture and criminal prosecution of Ukrainian minors Tihran Ohannisian and Mykyta Khanhanov by the Russian Federation*<sup>3</sup>. The EP Coordinator, staying in touch with Ukrainian NGO's initiated together with other MEPs the debate and resolution, under debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (Rule 144), on the detention and torture of the two teenaged Ukrainian boys accused of sabotage against the Russian occupying forces and calling for the immediate termination of the proceedings and dismissal of all charges against them. The EP Coordinator, in her capacity as a Vice President, chaired this debate.
- The EP Coordinator continued to engage on the issue of protecting and safeguarding the rights of Ukrainian children with relevant parliamentary committees<sup>4</sup>. She also co-

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0240\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0240_EN.html)

<sup>4</sup> For details, please see the Chapter on "Cooperation with parliamentary committees".

organised the conference “*Ukrainian children - what’s next for the young generation a year after the Russian aggression*”<sup>5</sup> with EPP members of national parliaments. This conference addressed issues concerning access to education and other key support systems for children and youth who came to the European Union following the outbreak of the war and also on the situation of the children forcibly deported to Russia. Additionally, the EP Coordinator committed, during her visit to Kyiv, to raise awareness of children deported or retained in Russia, Belarus and the occupied territories and their families struggle to bring them home. She engaged in the social media campaign #BringBackUkrainianKids using ‘ragdolls’ given to her by Ms Daria Herasymchuk, Ukrainian Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights as a symbolic representation of every child forcibly deported or retained during the war so far.

### ***Cooperation with parliamentary committees***

In 2023, the EP Coordinator engaged directly with some of the key committees with competences in different aspects of children’s rights. To support fruitful cooperation, the Office of the EP Coordinator developed and maintains good working relationships with the Secretariats of relevant parliamentary committees. To this end, its unique position as part of the Secretariat of the Committee on Legal Affairs is particularly beneficial and appreciated.

#### ***Cooperation with Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI)***

The EP Coordinator and the Office continued her special and close relations with the Committee on Legal Affairs as reflected in the ongoing cooperation on the legislative competences of this committee, namely family law issues, with a particular focus on cross-border procedures in parental child abduction and custody and access disputes, mediation and alternative disputes resolution and better law making. During 2023, the Office of the Coordinator continued to work closely with the Committee on these topics and stands continuously at the disposal of the Committee to collaborate and support its Secretariat on issues related to children’s rights, mediation and cross-border family law.

On 30 May 2023, at the request of the EP Coordinator, the Committee on Legal Affairs organised an exchange of views on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on the protection of children and cooperation in respect of intercountry adoption.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For details, please see Annex II.

<sup>6</sup> For details, please see the Chapter on “Promotion of the international and EU legal frameworks and their proper implementation in cross-border family law”.

### *Cooperation with the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI)*

On 1 March 2023 at the request of the EP Coordinator, the Subcommittee on Human Rights organised an exchange of views on the violation of international law and human rights of children from Ukraine forcibly deported to or retained in Russia<sup>7</sup>. The aim of the discussion was to focus attention on the plight of children forcibly deported to Russia and on possible international and humanitarian law breaches committed by Russian authorities, in follow up to the recommendations outlined in the European Parliament Resolution on 15 September 2022. In her opening remarks, the EP Coordinator stressed, that while all those responsible for the forced deportation of Ukrainian children must be brought to justice, the most pressing actions by the international community must focus on finding and returning the children to their families and caregivers in Ukraine. The invited experts explained the difficulties in locating missing children, outlined the systemic nature of the process undertaken by Russian authorities to integrate Ukrainian children into Russian society in contravention of international law and put forward evidence of violation of international and human rights laws. All speakers stressed the need to establish information about the status and situation of deported children alongside the need for systematic collection of evidence to prosecute those responsible. The debate took place in the presence of the European Commission Vice President for Democracy and Demography Dubravka Šuica.

Following on from this meeting, on 13 November 2023 the workshop on “*Forcible transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children: responses and accountability measures*” took place in DROI Committee where EP Coordinator again addressed this issue.

### *Cooperation with the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)*

On 28 June 2023, the EP Coordinator was invited to address the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs Interparliamentary Committee Meeting with National Parliaments on “*Children at the heart of Europe: Two years of the European Child Guarantee*”<sup>8</sup>. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the role and importance of national parliaments’ engagement and commitment to the ECG, and the efficient use of the ECG to fight poverty and social exclusion of young children across the EU.

On 13 September 2023, the EP Coordinator turned to the EMPL Committee to ask the committee look at the situation of young carers in the European Union in the form of a study and a possible hearing in light of the Commission Communication on a Care Strategy 2022. This particular group of children take on responsibility and care for family members with illness or disability, care that is normally associated with adults. There seems to be limited awareness and recognition of that issue. The Committee welcomed the suggestion and turned to the Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, DG IPOL to

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<sup>7</sup> Please see Annex III.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014\\_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/EMPL/OJ/2023/06-28/EMPL20230628\\_ICM\\_Child\\_Guarantee\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/EMPL/OJ/2023/06-28/EMPL20230628_ICM_Child_Guarantee_EN.pdf)

prepare an in-depth analysis on the subject of young carers in the EU. The EP Coordinator Office cooperated closely with the services and the in-depth analysis prepared for the EMPL Committee entitled “*The situation of young carers in Europe*” was published on 9 February 2024<sup>9</sup>.

### *Committee on Petitions (PETI)*

The EP Coordinator and her Office has an established day-to-day cooperation with the Committee on Petitions. On a regular basis, when relevant, the Committee refer petitions concerning children’s rights to the Coordinator and her Office. At the same time, while responding to individual enquiries, after assessing their content, the Office may suggest to the citizen to use the petition mechanism to address a particular issue.

### ***Cooperation within the Parliament’s administration***

The EP Coordinator and her Office increased communication and cooperation within Parliament’s administration in order to assist Parliament bodies on specific topics and issues related to child rights and also to support Parliament fulfil its commitment and obligations to promote and protect the rights of the child. In this regard, the Office has strengthened cooperation with:

- *President’s Cabinet*

The EP Coordinator and her Office stay in direct and continuous contact with the President’s Cabinet through a dedicated Cabinet member. The Office supports the President’s Cabinet on enquiries concerning cross-border family law or other child rights related matters.

- *Directorate - General for Communication*

- The EP Coordinator addressed the Directorate to highlight the importance of Parliament’s engagement with young citizens, not only to promote Parliament’s activities in the field of children’s rights but also to communicate and promote the purpose and values of the European Union and the benefit of including young people in the democratic process, including at the EU level. This engagement with young people is especially important in light of the upcoming elections so as to facilitate their inclusion, engagement and participation in the decision making process for the future of Europe.

- The Visitor’s Centre supported the EP Coordinator and the Office in organising and delivering a superb tour and presentation of the work and role of the European Parliament to the Child Participation Platform General Assembly participants on 26 June 2023<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2024/754204/IPOL\\_IDA\(2024\)754204\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2024/754204/IPOL_IDA(2024)754204_EN.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> For details, please see the Chapter “Cooperation with European Commission”.



- On World Children's Day 20 November, through close cooperation and assistance from DG COMM services, the EP Coordinator communicated through different media channels on the work of the Parliament that directly affects children and Parliament's commitment to the rights of the child.
- On the request and in cooperation with the European Parliament Liaison Office Zagreb, the EP Coordinator addressed the European Citizens Prize ceremony where the winning organisation "Vukovarski leptirići" were presented an award for their work on supporting children with disabilities and their families.
- *Directorate - General for Parliamentary Research Services*
  - The Office has established communication with the EPRS Policy officers on research on child rights related topics, in particular the work of Parliament on the situation of Ukrainian children.
  - The Office continues to support the ASK EP services on child rights related requests. Where relevant, on particular issues the ASK EP service directs citizens to the Office of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights.

### ***Cooperation with the European Commission***

The close cooperation with relevant directorates general and services in the European Commission is vital for the EP Coordinator and her Office. Depending on the subject, the EP Coordinator reaches out to her counterparts in the Commission to act in view of promoting and protecting the rights of the child within and outside the European Union. In this regard, the cooperation with the Office of European Commission Coordinator on the rights of the child that is part of DG JUST is vital and the Office of the EP Coordinator has established a close relations with the EC Coordinator resulting in exchange of information and cooperation on mutual activities and interests on a regular basis.

- EU Network on Children's Rights - Meetings on 16 March and 28 November 2023

The Office of the EP Coordinator represents the Parliament at the EU Network on Children's Rights established and managed by the Commission. In 2023 the Network focused on implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, best practices from national developments and on two key initiatives under the strategy, the setting up of the Child Participation Platform and the preparation of the initiative on integrated Child Protection Systems for 2024. The latter aims to support the development and strengthening of integrated child protection systems in the Member States. The EP Coordinator shared the Commission's public consultations on this topic that were opened from 14 July 2023 - 20 October 2023 through the Office networks and on social media.

- European Child Participation Platform<sup>11</sup>

One of the main aims of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child was to establish, with support of the European Parliament and jointly with child rights organisations, an EU Children's Participation Platform, to connect existing child participation mechanisms at local, national and EU level, and to involve children in a meaningful way in the decision-making processes at EU level. In this regard the EP Coordinator and her Office engaged in the following:

*EU Children's Participation Platform Advisory Board Meetings 15 March & 23 October 2023*

The Office of the EP Coordinator represents the Parliament on the Advisory Board of the EU Children's Participation Platform. The Advisory Board is made up of officials from the European Commission DG Justice Child Rights Team, European Union Fundamental Rights Agency and the Council of Europe alongside adult and children representatives from child rights organisations representing national child participation mechanisms, institutions and organisations. This group work together to develop the platform and work programme for the coming years. In 2023, the Office attended the 2nd and 3rd meeting of the Advisory Board.

*EU Children's Participation Platform - General Assembly 26-27 June 2023<sup>12</sup>*

The EP Coordinator addressed the first General Assembly of the EU Children's Participation Platform that brought together over 60 children and teenagers from across European Union with policy makers, national representatives, international organisations and civil society organisations to discuss key issues including child participation, climate change, child poverty, usage of the new technologies, mental health and the protection of children from violence. At the invitation of the EP Coordinator, both the young and adult participants to the General Assembly visited the European Parliament where they received an excellent seminar on the history and function of the European Parliament given by the DG COMM Visits and Seminars Unit together with a guided tour by the EP Coordinator's Office<sup>13</sup>.

- European Union Visitors Programme

The EP Coordinator's Office continues to participate in EUVP by meeting with young professionals from countries outside the EU to discuss the activities and duties of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights mostly related to the cross-border family disputes and other child's rights related initiatives at EU level. The Office also assists the EUVP participants with sourcing relevant and reliable information on ongoing work on legislation concerning children's rights.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://eu-for-children.europa.eu/home>

<sup>12</sup> <https://eu-for-children.europa.eu/activities-news/general-assembly>

<sup>13</sup> Please see Annex IV.

### ***Cooperation with NGOs, stakeholders and experts active in the field of children's rights***

In 2023, the EP Coordinator and her Office expanded and strengthened cooperation with institutions, bodies and stakeholders across the EU that focus on the protection and promotion of the rights of the child in a number of different fields.

During the year the EP Coordinator and/or her Office met and/or collaborated with many stakeholders, including government representatives, organisations and associations from the Member States and professionals dealing with specific issues relating to the rights of the child including:

- European Network of Ombudsperson for Children (ENOC)

The EP Coordinator and her Office continue close and well established cooperation with ENOC.

On 19 and 20 September the EP Coordinator addressed the ENOC Annual General Meeting entitled *“The strength of Independent Children's Rights Institutions: upholding children's rights in Europe”* held in the Flemish Parliament in Brussels. The meeting focused on the importance of independent national children's rights bodies in the Member States, the activities undertaken by national and regional Child Ombudspersons during the last year and on visibility and accessibility of national and regional institutions for children and young people.

The EP Coordinator continues to address individual Child Ombudspersons in the Member States in respect to individual cross-border child related matters.

- UNICEF

In June 2023, the EP Coordinator met with the newly appointed UNICEF's representative to the EU Institutions Mr Bertrand Bainvel to discuss the work of UNICEF, and in particular to discuss the situation of Ukrainian children.

In November, on the invitation of the EP Coordinator and in cooperation with the Office, young people from UNICEF visited the European Parliament in Brussels and recorded an interview with the EP Coordinator on various topics including violence, discrimination, climate change, mental health and access to education. The recording was part of the UNICEF information campaign on social media celebrating World Children's Day 20 November.

- Eurochild

The Office continues to have direct and well-established cooperation with Eurochild. The exchanges over the last year focused mainly on the Eurochild projects and activities related to early childhood education and care within the European Child Guarantee, and the protection of children in armed conflict.

- Hope & Homes for children

The Office cooperates with Hope & Homes for children in respect to their work in Ukraine, in particular their work to transition from institutional to family or community based care for children.

- Happy Kids Foundation

The Office engaged with the organisation to discuss the situation of the Ukrainian children from institutional care who at the beginning of the full scale Russian invasion in Ukraine were evacuated to Poland and are supported by the Foundation.

- Sport and Citizenship magazine

The EP Coordinator contributed to the publication on sexual violence in sport “Sexism and Sexual Violence in Sport/ Sexisme et violences sexuelles dans le sport”<sup>14</sup> on the positive benefits to children’s physical and mental health through sport, and thus the need to ensure their safety and wellbeing when engaging in sport both at amateur and professional levels.

- European Guardianship Network (EGN)

The EP Coordinator shared a message of support for the work of the EGN in their report “Celebrating World Children’s Day - listening to the voices of unaccompanied children in Europe and their guardians”<sup>15</sup>.

## **Coordinator’s Agenda 2024<sup>16</sup> in the field of coordination of the EP activities in the field of children’s rights**

The EP Coordinator will continue to cooperate closely with relevant parliamentary committees to facilitate the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. In the final months of her mandate she will continue to focus her work on some key topics including missing children, young carers and inclusive education.

On 24 October 2023, the EP Coordinator addressed the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on missing persons including children in Europe. The two committees decided to hold a joint discussion on enhanced cross-border coordination in view of missing persons, including children and the possibility to create the

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<sup>14</sup> Sport and Citizenship revue 54, February 2023: <https://www.sportetcitoyennete.com/en/articles-en/solutions-for-ending-sexism-and-sexual-abuse-in-sport>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.egnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Policy-conversation-young-persons-guardians-and-policy-makers-Tineke-Strik-and-EGN-November-2023.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> By the end of the parliamentary term.

European Centre for Missing Persons. The exchange of views is planned to take place on 9 April in a joint committee meeting with invited experts and in the presence of the EP Coordinator.

On 9-11 April 2024, the EP Coordinator plans to address the 4th International Young Carers Conference, themed “*Inclusion, Empowerment, Support, and Impact*” that will take place at Manchester Metropolitan University.

On 17 April 2024, the EP Coordinator hosts a High-Level Debate “*Building inclusive societies through education - The role of primary schools*”. This event will engage with practitioners, academics and stakeholders across the EU as well as relevant partners from the Commission, to identify existing problems and to share best practices and tools to support teachers, educators and policy makers in their role to promote and educate young children on inclusivity. The event will benefit from the cooperation of the [Chair of the] Committee on Culture and Education.

The EP Coordinator and her Office will continue to engage with experts and organisations in the field of children’s rights to ensure that the issues relevant to the promotion and protection of children’s rights will remain high on Parliament’s agenda.

## **II. International child abduction and other cross-border family disputes**

### **2023 activities summary**

#### ***Promotion of the international and EU legal frameworks and their proper implementation in cross-border family law***

##### ***30th Anniversary of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption***

On 30 May 2023, at the request of the EP Coordinator, the Committee on Legal Affairs held an exchange of views on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on the protection of children and cooperation in respect of intercountry adoption<sup>17</sup>.

In her opening remarks to the discussion, the EP Coordinator noted that the reality is that not every child can grow up in the care of their birth families, and where it is not possible for the child to remain in their care, adoption can give children a permanent loving and stable family. She stressed that in cases of intercountry adoption specific safeguards must be in place to prevent the exploitation of children, birth families and adoptive parents. She also spoke about the issue of illegal adoption in or from States that are not party to the Convention, and the real threat of illegal adoptions in situations of armed conflict.

Ms Laura Martínez-Mora, representing the Hague Conference on Private International Law then provided the Committee with an excellent account of the state of play 30 years on, including the progress made, for example, in the legal framework and procedures in adoption practice. She also noted the better cooperation between States. She addressed the remaining challenges including weak or deficient child protection services. Also, the “Toolkit for preventing and addressing illicit practices” was presented, that was officially published on 1 June 2023. This toolkit provides practical guidance on identifying and dealing with illicit practices and on enhancing cooperation between States.

##### ***1980 Hague Convention Experts Meeting - Nurturing the 1980 Hague Convention - The University of Westminster, London 19 & 20 October 2023***

At the invitation of the Experts Group, the EP Coordinator addressed the meeting of the 1980 Hague Convention Experts’ Meeting on 19-20 October 2023. This group of interdisciplinary abduction experts from many jurisdictions worked on selected issues of concern to support the work of the 1980 Hague Convention for the protection of children in parental child abduction situations worldwide. This meeting addressed child participation in Convention proceedings,

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<sup>17</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014\\_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/JURI/OJ/2023/05-30/1279363EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/JURI/OJ/2023/05-30/1279363EN.pdf)

domestic violence in Convention proceedings and the relationship between the Convention proceedings and asylum and refugee law.

### *Training and knowledge sharing*

The EP Coordinator's Office continues to engage with academia in the field of international family law through participation in trainings, seminars and other events like:

- *Family law and human rights* 7-8 February 2023 seminar organised by European Academy of Law
- *Children's protection in private international law* 1 June 2023 organised in collaboration with conflictolaw.net and American Society of International Law Private International Interest Group at the Sydney Law School Centre for Asian and Pacific Law (CAPLUS)
- *Annual Conference on European Family Law*, Trier, 21-22 September 2023 organised by European Academy of Law.

### *Individual enquiries on parental child abductions, cross-border family cases and child related issues*

Through her Office's direct contact with European citizens and with stakeholders in the Member States, the EP Coordinator is uniquely positioned to understand and react, within her mandate, to the difficulties faced by parents and children in cross-border family disputes across the European Union, in particular parental child abductions. In 2023, she continued to react to breaches of EU and international law, including the 1980 Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and the Brussels IIb Regulation. The Office continued to receive and reply to enquiries related to parental child abductions, cross-border family matters that involve children and other child related matters, including of the domestic nature.

In 2023, the EP Coordinator's Office dealt with **46 enquiries from citizens**. Some of them required extensive research and follow-up exchanges.

In each case, the Office endeavours to provide information on the possible steps to take and on relevant services and authorities in the Member States or third countries to contact. Also in cases of domestic family law disputes, while the EP Coordinator does not have competence to deal with such cases, her Office, where appropriate, tried to provide information and refer citizens to relevant authorities and services in the requester's state for assistance. On cross-border family law enquiries, the Office acts strictly on the understanding that the information and support provided does not amount to, or replace legal advice, which the requesting citizen is strongly encouraged to seek from lawyers with expertise in international family law, should it be required. Also, strict rules on data protection are applied.

Similar to previous years, in 2023, when citizens addressed the EP Coordinator on cross-border family matters, the cases were legally complex, highly conflictual and often long running. As in previous years, the main issues encountered by parents were on difficulties seeking legal

remedy, lengthy legal proceedings and lack of enforcement of final court decisions by national authorities.

Additionally, the EP Coordinator and her Office observed two significant issues raised in enquiries in 2023. First, domestic violence as a driving reason behind parental child abduction in 1980 Hague Convention proceedings. The EP Coordinator and her Office engaged with a number of stakeholders on this issue, including the 2023 experts group meeting on the 1980 Hague Convention (see above). While the success of the Convention in resolving and also preventing parental child abduction is well recognised, the EP Coordinator notes that in the context of domestic violence allegations effective protective measures for parents fleeing domestic violence are essential. To ensure the safety of both the child and parent the EP Coordinator continues to advocate for close cooperation between the courts, state services and central authorities in these cases.

The second emerging issue observed was where the abducting parent, facing the return of their child following the final court decision, requested the intervention of the EP Coordinator. Here the EP Coordinator informs the parent that she does not have competence to intervene or change judgments given by the courts in the Member States and third countries. Where appropriate and based on the details of the individual case, the Office may be able to provide information on relevant authorities in the particular state to assist the parent.

In 2023, the EP Coordinator continued to make use of diplomatic intervention to address the lack of enforcement of a final judgment on the return of the child to the country of habitual residence.

The Office noticed increased awareness among Members of the European Parliament about the work of the EP Coordinator in cross-border family law matters, with a number of cases coming from Members particularly in 2023.

Overall, since the beginning of her mandate in July 2019, the EP Coordinator and her Office addressed almost **300 enquiries from citizens**. While most requests for assistance came from EU citizens, some third country nationals turned to the EP Coordinator for advice and support as well. Enquires on cross-border parental child abductions, included intra-EU cases, cases between EU countries and third countries that are parties to the 1980 Hague Convention<sup>18</sup> and also cases with countries that do not cooperate under the Convention. The majority of requests for assistance came from fathers and the ‘left behind’ parents.

The Office has observed a decline in the number of enquiries from citizens during this legislative period. This decline correlates both with the development of the information provided on the webpages of the EP Coordinator on Parliament’s website and awareness raising actions both at EU level and in the Member States.

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<sup>18</sup> All EU Member States are party to the Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.



The Office continued to receive requests for information on the work and activities of the EP Coordinator from academics, researchers, journalists and national/local non-profit organisations and networks of legal professionals.

The EP Coordinator continued to raise awareness about the EU and international legal framework in the field of cross-border family law and to address the outstanding issues concerning the proper implementation of the existing rules. On the parental child abduction cases, the EP Coordinator and her Office stay in close cooperation with DG JUST and, where appropriate, other relevant EU bodies.

### ***Promotion of cross-border mediation***

The EP Coordinator continued to advocate for the use of mediation in disputes involving children in cross-border family cases, in particular among those most closely involved in such disputes, i.e. judges, lawyers and national central authorities. The EP Coordinator stays in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders on this issue, including with International Mediation Centre for Family Conflict and Child Abduction (MiKK) and other networks. In 2023, the EP Coordinator's Office continued to highlight the importance of mediation to parents while dealing with their enquiries on parental child abduction or other cross-border family cases.

- In April 2023, the EP Coordinator gave her support to the development of AMICABLE 2. This project has two main aims. The first aim is to provide practical legal guidance for EU judges and lawyers working on cross-border recognition and enforceability of mediated family agreements in child abduction, parental responsibility and relocation cases. The second aim is to promote a Best Practice Model for incorporating mediation into the expeditious, tight 6-week timeframe of parental child abduction proceedings. This project builds upon the previous AMICABLE project which successfully developed Best Practice Tools for Germany, Poland, Spain, Italy as well as an EU General Best Practice Tool. AMICABLE 2 will provide an EU General BPT and 3 Country-specific BPT for France, Lithuania and Sweden. This work facilitates the promotion of mediation to a wider audience of practitioners through the national projects in the participating states. The EP Coordinator and her Office are once again invited to participate in the steering committee of the project.
- The EP Coordinator supported and contributed to the publication “*Cross-border Family Mediation: International Parental Child Abduction, Custody and Access Cases*” 3rd updated and expanded edition - edited by Christoph C. Paul, Sybille Kiesewetter and Ischtar Khalaf-Newsome in cooperation with MikK e.V International Mediation Centre for Family Conflict and Child Abduction Wolfgang Metzner Verlag, 2023<sup>19</sup>. This 3rd edition provides a comprehensive guide to professionals working in international family law, international child abduction, and other cross-border family law disputes.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://mikk-ev.org/news/publications/>

The Office represented the EP Coordinator at the official launch of the book on 27 October 2023.

- Family Mediation ongoing training, MiKK Berlin 27-29 October 2023

The Office of the EP Coordinator participated in ongoing training organised by MiKK to understand better the use of mediation and mediation's technics during the cross-border family mediation. The training consisted of 3 full day workshops on:

- "Dancing the Minefield? - handling family mediation cases with a background of domestic violence"
- "Evidence - based conflict resolution - How current findings from neuroscience, psychology and conflict research contribute to more ease and success in mediation"
- "Systemic conflict resolution in cross-border family cases. Advanced mediation: How to generate ingenious solutions".

## **Coordinator's Agenda 2024 in the field of international child abduction and other cross-border family disputes**

Guided by the mandate, the EP Coordinator and her Office will continue to provide requesting parents with information in cross-border family matters and address the shortcomings in the implementation of the existing rules through diplomatic interventions, where appropriate and deemed necessary. The EP Coordinator will continue to promote mediation in both cross-border and domestic family law disputes.

On 19 March 2024, the Committee on Legal Affairs will hear the results of a study undertaken at the Committee's request on parental child abduction to countries that do not cooperate under the 1980 Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The EP Coordinator will be present at the meeting to contribute to this debate.

### **III. Revised mandate of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights**

As planned under the EP Coordinator's agenda for 2023, in view of the wider EP reform exercise and taking into account the experience gained in recent years, the EP Coordinator reviewed the competences vested to herself and the Office in 2018 by the Bureau of the Parliament.

On 20 November 2023, the Bureau of Parliament endorsed the recommendations presented by Ewa Kopacz Vice President and EP Coordinator on Children's Rights. The revised mandate aims to strengthen the role, competence and visibility of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights and Office to support Parliament's commitment and obligations to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child for the next legislative period 2024-2029.

The revised mandate<sup>20</sup> of the EP Coordinator incorporates a comprehensive set of actions that will:

- strengthen, support and clarify the role and function of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights as a formal body of Parliament responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child under the two main responsibilities of the Coordinator:
  - i. promote, protect and mainstream the rights of the child in the Parliament and
  - ii. act as a central contact point in the Parliament on parental child abduction and other cross-border family matters.
- increase the visibility of the EP Coordinator both within the Parliament and outside,
- provide mechanisms and tools to support the work of the EP Coordinator and the Office.

In 2024 until the end of her mandate, the EP Coordinator and the Office will work towards the implementation of the changes under the revised mandate and ensuring a smooth transition of the position to the new parliamentary term 2024-2029.

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<sup>20</sup> For the revised mandate please see Annex 5 and the website of the EP Coordinator.

## Annex I

### Summary of the meetings during the joint mission to Kyiv on 20 April 2023

- **Meeting with the Ukrainian government**

VIPs participants from the UA side:

Ms Oksana Zholnovych, Minister of Social Policy

Mr Oksen Lisovyi, Minister of Education and Science

Mr Serhii Dubrov, Deputy Minister of Health

Ms Yulia Sokolovska, Head of National Social Care Service

Mr Vasyl Lutsyk, Deputy Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine

Mr Dmytro Lubinets, Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr Murat Sahin, UNICEF Country Director

Main topics during the meeting:

The meeting with the Ukrainian Ministers focused on:

- Ukrainian children from the institutions relocated to EU Member States and their safe return to Ukraine,
- Ukrainian children deported to Russia and occupied territories,
- support for Ukrainian children who remains in Ukraine, especially on the planned reform on the deinstitutionalisation of care and establishment of a new system of family based care.

In the context of Ukrainian children from the institutions relocated to EU Member States, the pilot project in Poland coordinated with the Commission was discussed, that aims at dividing large groups of Ukrainian children into smaller ones and guarantying the access to the family based care especially for the youngest children while returning them back to Ukraine.

The Ukrainian side underlined its strong commitment to establishing the legislative framework for comprehensive childcare and child support system, including the continued legal approximation towards EU rules.

The cooperation with UNICEF was mentioned concerning the best practices and expertise in view of supporting the adoptive and foster families. Also, the project on zero children in the institutions was presented, that will be firstly implemented in 3 regions in the south of Ukraine. The new training program for future foster and adoptive families was also discussed.

In view of Ukrainian children and the access to education, the online learning and the attempt to create inclusive education system that could accommodate the needs of

children with disabilities was discussed as a possible part of the deinstitutionalisation reform.

In view of access of Ukrainian children to health care system, the problem of declining vaccinations rates was underlined, the question of recognition of forms of disabilities and decreasing level of mental health were raised.

The participants of the meeting were also informed on the situation of Ukrainian children deported to Russia and occupied territories and the difficulties faced by parents in their efforts to reunify with their children.

The meeting was finished with press point where both EU and Ukrainian sides concluded and summarised the discussion.

- **Field visits in Kyiv accompanied by Ms Oksana Zohlnovyh, Minister of Social Policies**

- 1. Visit to Disabled Children Rehabilitation Centre

- This is a locally based day care centre for children with mental disabilities established by parents. Children have a possibility to learn skills that enable them to be independent in life and they have opportunity to undergo the rehabilitation sessions with specialists.

- 2. Sviatoshyn District Youth Dormitory

- This institution takes care of more than 150 boys and young men (up to 35 years old) with mental disabilities. Almost 100 of them were relocated first to Poland and then to Germany, where they have been staying until now. Contrary to first place, this is a 24/7 dormitory, where pupils stays permanently.

- 3. Family style orphanage

- The visited family has three children of their own and one adopted child. Additionally, they are taking care of eight other children who are placed there to avoid the institutionalisation.

- **Meeting with First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska**

The meeting with First Lady focused on the planned deinstitutionalisation reform and to challenges both financial and social. The discussion summarised the meeting with the Ministers that took place in the morning and all sides underlined their commitments to engage and support the reform at the relevant levels. The part of the exchange was devoted to the children deported to Russia and the attempts to return those children to the Ukrainian territory.

- **Meeting with Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Daria Herasymchuk**

The meeting was entirely dedicated to the situation of Ukrainian children deported to Russia. The Commissioner outlined how the children are being deported, which

children are the most vulnerable in such situations and possible ways to return them back to Ukraine. She underlined that the political pressure from the international community should be firm and constant towards Russian authorities. Each member of the delegation received the most recent data and information and ragdolls, which are symbolic personification of every child forcibly deported to Russia and occupied territories. There was also an information given on the children who are retained in the territory of Belarus.

## Annex II

### Ukrainian children - what's next for the young generation a year after the Russian aggression

Meeting of EPP Members of National Parliaments and EPP Members of the European Parliament

**Wednesday, 15 March, 16h30-18h00 CET**

**Room SDM S3 Strasbourg  
(In a hybrid format)**

#### Draft agenda

**DE EN FR IT EL ES CS PT PL SL RO (tbc)**

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 16.30 - 16.35 | Welcome by <b>Evangelos MEIMARAKIS MEP</b> , Vice-Chair of the EPP Group, responsible for the relations with the National Parliaments  |
| 16.35 -16.55  | <p><b>Raising awareness towards destroying the identity of Ukrainian children by forced deportation to Russia</b></p> <p>Introductory remarks and moderation by <b>Ewa KOPACZ MEP</b>, Vice President of the European Parliament, European Parliament coordinator on Children's Rights</p> <p>Intervention by Vice President <i>Dubravka ŠUICA</i>, Commissioner for Democracy and Demography</p> <p>Intervention by representative of <b>NGO Magnolia</b> - gathering and sharing evidence of forced deportations and illegal adoptions of Ukrainian children (tbc)</p> |
| 16.55 - 17.15 | <b>Session of Q&amp;A and exchange of views</b>  |
| 17.15 -17.35  | <b>Access to education and support systems for Ukrainian children and youth - where is EU a year after the Russian aggression</b>  |

Introductory remarks and moderation by **Michaela ŠOJDROVÁ MEP**, Vice Chair of Committee on Education and Culture (CULT)

Intervention by **Mariya GABRIEL**, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

Intervention by **Tanya HRISTOVA**, President of the Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC) at the Committee of the Regions (tbc)

17.35-17.55

**Q&A discussion and exchange of views**

17.55 - 18.00

Concluding remarks by **Ewa KOPACZ MEP**, Vice President of the European Parliament, European Parliament coordinator on Children's Rights



## Subcommittee on Human Rights

### Exchange of views

On the violation of international law and human rights of children from  
Ukraine forcibly deported to or retained in Russia

Brussels, 1 March 2023

Room

Spaak

4B001

17:15-18:30

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#### **PROGRAMME**

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#### **17:15    Introductory remarks**

- **Udo Bullmann** - Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights
- **Ewa Kopacz** - Vice President and European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights

#### **Special Guest**

- **Dubravka Šuica** Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Democracy and Demography

#### **Joint intervention on the overall situation by**

- **Maryna Lypovetska** - NGO Magnolia
- **Mykola Komarovskiy** - Lawyer at the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group

#### **Intervention on the legal dimension**

- **Emmanuel Daoud** - French Lawyer specialised in international human rights law

#### **Questions from MEPs**

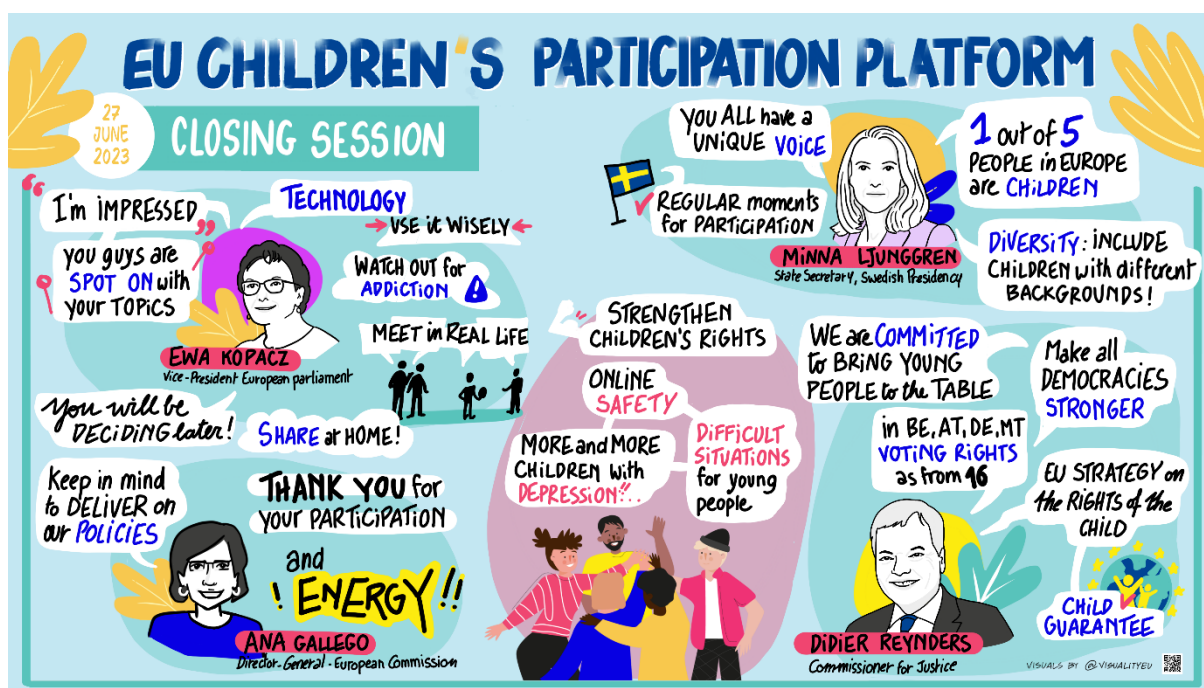
## Annex IV

### Programme EU's Children Participation Platform -General Assembly 26-27 June 2023

Timing	Session	Room	Participants
<b>Day 1 26 June 2023</b>			
8.30-9.30	<b>Arrival and registration at Centre Albert Borschette</b>	Entrance	Children and accompanying adults, Member State representatives, other adult participants
9.30-11.00	<b>Opening session – Welcome to the EU's Children Participation Platform!</b> <i>This is the big start and welcome. The session is co-led by the members of the Children's Panel and Ana Gallego who will introduce you to the event and child participation. They will also want to hear from you what expectations you have participating in the General Assembly. You will listen to a conversation between children and adults, including adults working at the EU institutions:</i> <b>Dubravka Šuica</b> (Vice-President of the European Commission), <b>Milan Brlež</b> (Member of the European Parliament and Co-Chair of the Child Rights Intergroup of the European Parliament), and <b>Ana Gallego</b> (Director-General for Justice and Consumers, the European Commission).	Room 0A, ground floor	Children and accompanying adults, Member State representatives, other adult participants
11.00-11.30	<b>Coffee break</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	Children and accompanying adults
		Ground floor	Member States representatives, other adult participants
11.30-12.30	<b>Creating connections across Europe</b> <i>Time to get to know each other. In this session you will be divided into smaller groups where you will be doing some ice-breaking and teambuilding activities. Together you will also reflect on the event and find some common rules for working together.</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	Children and accompanying adults
	<b>Creating connections between generations</b> <i>In this session, Member States representatives will discuss and learn together about how to safely and meaningfully interact, communicate and work together with children.</i>	Room 0A, ground floor	Member States representatives, other adult participants
12.30-14.00	<b>Lunch break</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> floor	Children and accompanying adults, Member State representatives
14.00-15.00	<b>EU, me &amp; you</b> <i>In this session, you will explore what the EU means for all of us. This session will be focused on children's rights in the EU. You will also investigate together with representatives of national governments from countries across Europe what and how child participation is in the EU.</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	Children and accompanying adults, Member State representatives
15.00-15.30	<b>Coffee break</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	
15.30-18.00	<b>Visit to the European Parliament</b> <i>At the Invitation of the Vice President and European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights, we will go together to visit the European Parliament and learn about its function.</i>	Departure from 3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	Children and accompanying adults
15.30-17:00	<b>Lessons learnt</b>	Room 0A, ground floor	Member States representatives

18.00-21.00	<i>Evening programme</i>	Hotel/Other	Children and accompanying adults
<b>Day 2</b>	<b>27 June 2023</b>		
8.30-9.00	<b>Arrival at Centre Albert Borschette</b>	Entrance	Children and accompanying adults
9.00-10.00	<b>Warm up</b>	3rd floor	Children and accompanying adults
10.00-11.00	<b>Introduction to thematic workshops</b> <i>You will hear about the five topics of the next thematic workshops. You will be invited to choose to participate in the workshop you like the most.</i>	3rd floor	Children and accompanying adults, Thematic experts
11.00-11.30	<i>Coffee break</i>	3rd floor	Children and accompanying adults, Thematic experts
11.30-13.00	<b>Thematic workshops:</b> <b>1. Children's rights</b> <i>This theme is about the rights of the child in general and what is the EU plan on children's rights. We will talk about children's wellbeing and mental health, access to care services such as afterschool services, play, leisure and healthy eating. You will hear about creating environments that allow all children to learn, grow, achieve and enjoy their rights.</i> DG JUST, DG SANTE, DG EAC, DG AGRI (tbc) <b>2. Children for a fairer and greener Europe</b> <i>You will get to know different ways of children's inclusion in decision making processes to make a greener Europe. This workshop is about how to make our life greener with adapting healthier, more sustainable attitudes.</i> DG CLIMA, JRC (tbc) <b>3. Protection from violence</b> <i>This topic is about right to be safe. You will learn about what the EU does to fight violence against children online and offline, what are the rules to protect children arriving to the EU alone and with their parents, how children's voice is important to prevent violence and support children victims of violence.</i> DG JUST, DG HOME (tbc) <b>4. Child poverty</b> <i>This topic includes child poverty and an EU document called the EU Child Guarantee as an instrument to break the circle of poverty. You will learn about how to help children who are in difficult situations and make sure that their rights are protected and they are included in societies.</i> DG EMPL, EP Intergroup on children's rights (tbc) <b>5. Co-creating consultations</b> <i>In this group, you will learn how to create activities for children which help you and other children share ideas on issues that are important to you and them. You can help us to think of and come up with ways of hearing children's ideas.</i>	3rd floor	Children and accompanying adults, Thematic experts
13.00-14.00	<i>Lunch break</i>	5 <sup>th</sup> floor	Children and accompanying adults, Thematic experts
14.00-15.00	<b>Continuation of thematic workshops</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	Children and accompanying adults, Thematic experts
15.00-15.30	<i>Coffee break</i>	3rd floor	Children and accompanying adults, Thematic experts
15.30-16.00	<b>Sharing our learning</b> <i>Following all the discussions you have done in the session before, now it's time to present it to the other children from other working groups.</i>	Room 0D, ground floor	Children and accompanying adults, Thematic experts
16.00-17.00	<b>Closing session</b> <i>We will all come together to hear the ideas that you have decided to present from the previous session, with input from the <b>Children's Panel</b> and adults working at the EU:</i> <i><b>Didier Reynders</b> (European Commissioner for Justice),</i> <i><b>Ewa Kopacz</b> (Vice-President and Coordinator on children's rights of the European Parliament),</i> <i>Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU (tbc)</i> <i>and</i>	Room 0D, ground floor	Children and accompanying adults, Thematic experts

	Ana Gallego (Director-General for Justice and Consumers, the European Commission).		
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## Annex V

### **Main elements of the revised mandate and working method of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights and the Office endorsed by EP Bureau on 20 November 2023**

On 20 November 2023, the Bureau of Parliament endorsed the recommendations presented by Ewa Kopacz, Vice-President and the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights, to revise the mandate of the EP Coordinator to support Parliament's commitment to promote and protect the rights of the child for the next legislative period 2024-2029.

The revision of the mandate is based on the experience of Vice President Kopacz as the first EP Coordinator to complete a full parliamentary term following the establishment of the Office in 2018, and builds upon the work of her predecessors (McGuinness 2016, Morin-Chartier 2018 and Corazza Bildt 2019).

**The revised mandate**, accompanied by a detailed set of internal recommendations has **three main elements** and incorporates a comprehensive set of actions:

- To strengthen, support and clarify the role and function of the EP Coordinator and her/his Office as Parliament's body responsible for promotion and protection of the rights of the child and to represent Parliament's position on children's rights in an impartial and expert way in the main areas of activities as enshrined in the current mandate;
- To increase the visibility of the EP Coordinator both within the Parliament and outside;
- To provide mechanisms and instruments to support the EP Coordinator's activities.

The **set of actions** under the revised mandate is as follows:

- Embed and empower the position of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights as the formal representative body of Parliament on children's rights and ensure the EP Coordinator represents Parliament independently from his/her political affiliation.
- Further strengthen cooperation and support to parliamentary committees in their work on children's rights.
- Develop in-house expertise and knowledge sharing on children's rights, including through research and studies in cooperation with parliamentary committees and independently, and through increased cooperation with external experts on various child rights issues covered by the mandate of the Coordinator.
- Confirm the role of the EP Coordinator and the Office to maintain direct contact with citizens that relate to individual cross-border family law issues only. The role of the Office in responding to individual enquiries from citizens is to provide information and

guidance on the possible steps the citizen could take, including information on cross-border family mediation where appropriate.

- Continue to focus its activities on international family law and cross-border family law policy and developments through engagement with stakeholders, studies and promoting best practices, especially in the area of cross-border family law, cross-border family mediation and child-friendly justice, based also on the knowledge and experience gained via direct enquires from citizens.
- Increase the visibility of the role, function and activities of the EP Coordinator through official EP communication channels, awareness raising and use of in-house communication tools both within the Parliament and with external stakeholders. This increased visibility and communication aims to provide clarity and limit misunderstandings or confusion with any political activities undertaken by other unofficial gatherings and groupings of Members, for both internal and external stakeholders on the role and function of the Coordinator.
- Ensure appropriate support to the EP Coordinator in carrying out his/her function through the Office of the EP Coordinator on Children's Rights. Due to its inseparable connection concerning international private law and family law, the Office and its staff is administratively part of the Committee on Legal Affairs' Secretariat in DG IPOL under the responsibility of its Head of Unit.