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30 years of children rights: let's act!

Thirty years ago, 20 November 1989, Members of the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). To date, it is the most widely ratified binding international treaty in the world - only the United States of America did not ratify it. However, there is still a lot of work to be done!

Over the past 30 years, children around the world have increasingly gained access to rights. A majority of states have adopted more protective and emancipatory legislation for children. Governments have taken action against child abuse and exploitation, the primary education rate has increased, and child mortality has dropped to 50 percent since 1990. We can only applaud the work of grassroots associations and all services dedicated to children who strive to make these rights a daily reality.

We welcome the enormous progress that has taken place over the last three decades but one can only draw a bitter report on the current situation of the rights of the child in the European Union.

We need EU action to ensure children have a decent life out of poverty

Today in Europe, 25% of children live in a state of poverty or are at risk of living in poverty. We believe, the European Union and Member States should invest in public services for children, including childcare, education and health. We want the EU and Member States to step up efforts to end child poverty. A further Council Recommendation on Investing in Children to update and upgrade its policy framework to guide Member States in their efforts should be adopted, to ensure children to grow up in inclusive and prosperous societies, where no one is left behind. We want to set ambitious targets to reduce child poverty by half in Europe's 2030 agenda. We want policies that address the needs of children, youth and young families to be extended beyond the scope of the Child Guarantee and Youth Guarantee. We believe we should aim at encouraging national policy reforms in order to contribute to children's equal access to free health care, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition for the eradication of child poverty and social exclusion. For the Greens/EFA, social justice is a key priority especially when it affects the most vulnerable part of the population.

Children have the right to a planet that is worth living on

According to the World Health Organisation, more than one in every four deaths of children in the world under 5 years is directly or indirectly related to environmental risks. Children, as a vulnerable group, are heavily affected by the negative impact of climate change and are among the first victims of its adverse effects such as droughts, floods, storms, food crises or pollution. Climate change and environmental risks caused by human activity, including air pollution, endocrine disruptors, pesticides, among others, affects children in damaging ways. Children have been at the heart of recent climate marches and mobilisation against climate change. For the Greens/EFA, environmental health and the fight against climate change are at the core of our work in the European Parliament. We want to ensure a healthy environment for all children, combating the negative effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the Paris Agreement.

Children have the right to protection

We are extremely concerned about the situation of children in the context of migration, especially the detention of children. We want EU Member States to end the detention of children. Studies have shown that children living in detention have experienced traumatic experience, which has had serious impact on their physical and mental health. We believe EU migration policy should be based on humanity and solidarity. In accordance with the Convention, the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in all decisions made, concerning migrant children. We call on the Council to follow the European Parliament's path and to adopt the Common European Asylum System package in order to improve the condition of all children in migration, in particular unaccompanied children. The current and worrying situation of children in the hotspots is extremely alarming. We also call on all the Member States to facilitate family reunification in a positive, humane and expeditious manner, in line with Article 10 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Those are only a few examples on how children rights are currently at stake in the EU. We very much hope this 30th anniversary will be the opportunity to put children rights at the top of the agenda and make sure their rights are respected.

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