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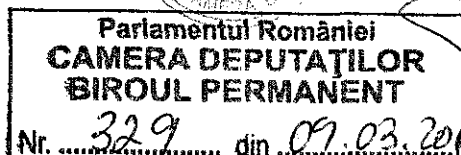
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Parlamentul României Camera Deputaților



București, 4 martie 2015

INFORMARE

privind participarea la
reuniunea Comisiei generale pentru dezvoltare socială, educație,
cercetare și știință a Adunării Parlamentare a SEECP
- București, 26-27 februarie 2015 -

În perioada 26-27 februarie 2015 s-a desfășurat la Palatul Parlamentului, în organizarea Camerei Deputaților, reuniunea Comisiei generale pentru dezvoltare socială, educație, cercetare și știință a Adunării Parlamentare a Procesului de Cooperare din Europa de Sud-Est (**AP SEECP**) a cărei Președinție revine, pentru mandatul în curs, doamnei deputat Gabriela-Maria Podașcă.

La reuniune au participat reprezentanți ai delegațiilor la AP SEECP din partea parlamentelor din Ankara, Belgrad, București, Chișinău, Ljubljana, Pogorica, Sarajevo, Sofia și Tirana, reprezentanți ai Secretariatului Regional pentru Cooperare Parlamentară în Europa de Sud-Est de la Sofia, precum și oficiali și reprezentanți ai unor diverse instituții și autorități din țara gazdă (*lista participanților anexată*). Din partea Delegației Parlamentului României la AP SEECP au luat parte doamna deputat **Gabriela-Maria Podașcă** (PSD) și domnul deputat **Vasile - Daniel Suci** (PSD).

Reuniunea de la București a presupus o sesiune de deschidere, urmată de dezbateri, pe tema: „Prevenirea excluziunii sociale a copiilor aflați în situații de risc - o investiție în dezvoltarea regională”, și de adoptarea unui Raport și a unei Rezoluții (*program anexat*).

Lucrările au fost deschise și prezidate de către doamna deputat Podașcă care după câteva remarci introductive a dat cuvântul doamnei deputat **Rodica Nassar** (PSD), Vicepreședinte al Camerei Deputaților, în calitate de reprezentant al gazdelor reuniunii.

În alocuțiunea domniei sale, doamna deputat Nassar a transmis participanților un cuvânt de bun venit și a făcut aprecieri despre importanța comisiilor generale - înființate la București în cadrul Sesiunii inaugurale din mai 2014 - evidențiind principalele oportunități pe care acestea le oferă pentru atingerea obiectivelor Adunării.

Cel de-al doilea vorbitor din sesiunea de deschidere a fost doamna Oana Rogoveanu, Director, Direcția Drepturile Omului, Protecția Minorităților și Consiliul Europei din Ministerul Afacerilor Externe, care a felicitat Comisia pentru tema aleasă în acord cu liniile de reformă din regiune, a punctat principalele repere care definesc SEECP în dezideratul de transformare spre mai bine a țărilor din regiune și a amintit care este rolul asumat în organizația guvernamentală de partea română.

Înainte de secțiunea de dezbateri, doamna deputat Podașcă, în calitate de Președinte al Comisiei, a făcut câteva constatări procedurale privind îndeplinirea prevederilor și condițiilor statutare legate de pregătirea și desfășurarea reuniunii, remarcând, între altele, mandatele scrise cu care participă reprezentanții

parlamentelor din Sarajevo și Podgorica. Ulterior a fost aprobată consensual Agenda reuniunii.

Dna Sandie Blanchet, reprezentant UNICEF România, a avut o primă prezentare tematică în care a introdus principalele elemente de context legate de temă, a dat câteva exemple privind colaborarea UNICEF România cu Parlamentul României și apoi a subliniat direcțiile majore de acțiune necesare pentru o abordare corectă a problematicii în discuție (finanțarea domeniului sub diverse aspecte, monitorizarea evoluțiilor și realizarea de studii adecvate, inclusiv de impact, asigurarea accesului tuturor copiilor la resurse și servicii etc). Vorbitoarea a oferit apoi participanților câteva date privind stadiul în care se află diverse state europene, cu accent pe cele din regiunea SEECP, în ceea ce privește sărăcia în rândul copiilor, remarcând că, dincolo de datele generale, este importantă urmărirea unor aspecte în profunzime (accesibilitatea resurselor și a serviciilor, calitatea serviciilor, participarea copiilor etc) deoarece progresele generale care rezultă din date nu sunt neapărat în beneficiul tuturor copiilor. De aici importanța monitorizării pentru a ne asigura că este întrunivă universalitatea serviciilor și că resursele financiare alocate sunt utilizate pentru implementarea politicilor în domeniu.

O a doua prezentare tematică a fost realizată de doamna Gabriela Coman, Președintele Autorității Naționale pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului și Adopție (ANPDCA). Vorbitoarea a menționat relația bună existentă între ANPDCA și Parlamentul României, sprijinul important al UNICEF și ajutorul esențial al Guvernului actual al României care a înțeles corect necesitatea reînființării ANPDCA ca instituție vitală pentru a asigura o abordare integrată a problematicii specifice copiilor. În continuare doamna Coman a furnizat o serie de date statistice privind: situația copiilor din România, cadrul normativ, politicile și strategiile dezvoltate, precum și măsurile implementate și vizate în perspectivă. Din această expunere a reieșit, între altele, că și în România există diferențe mari în ceea ce privește accesul copiilor la resurse și servicii, așa cum este cazul între copiii din mediul urban și cei din mediul rural, ultimii fiind drastic defavorizați, precum și că la reușita politicilor actuale contribuie substanțial și asigurarea unor aspecte importante, precum: pachetul minim de servicii pentru copii și instituția asistentului social pentru copii de la nivelul autorităților locale. Doamna Coman și-a manifestat interesul deosebit pentru a afla din experiențele altor state din regiune în vederea utilizării bunelor practici de către partea română.

Din dezbaterile care au urmat am reținut intervențiile următorilor:

- doamna Esmeralda Shkja, parlamentar albanez, care a oferit câteva date privind situația copiilor din țara sa și practicile de succes utilizate, adăugând în final și câteva considerații privind situația copiilor aparținând minorității albaneze din Kosovo;
- doamna Olena Puga, parlamentar sârb, care a descris modul în care este organizat și funcționează Comitetul pentru drepturile copiilor din Republica Serbia, ca operator interinstituțional al autorităților sârbe în domeniu. Vorbitoarea a apreciat că tema propusă de partea română pentru reuniunea de comisie a AP SEECP constituie o foarte bună oportunitate de a face utile schimburi de experiență în domeniu și a elogiât conținutul documentelor propuse spre adoptare de gazdele române, manifestându-și sprijinul față de acestea;
- doamna Tulay Bakir, parlamentar turc, care a prezentat experiența țării sale în domeniu (cadru normativ și evoluții, strategii, date statistice, problematică specifică). Vorbitoarea a atins și problema copiilor care provin dintre refugiații sirieni și, în context, a menționat proiectul 'școlilor de iubire' dezvoltat pentru a ajuta acești copii din punct de vedere emoțional;
- domnul Stefan Kenov, parlamentar bulgar, a vorbit despre situația specifică a copiilor din Bulgaria, precizând că ameliorarea acesteia reprezintă o prioritate a autorităților bulgare.

A urmat o scurtă sesiune de întrebări și răspunsuri între vorbitorii tematici și participanți în care: au fost menționate câteva alte exemple de bună practică, precum și alte date statistice naționale (interlocutorilor antemenționați adăugându-li-se cu această ocazie și doamna Ina Verzivoli, Președintele Agenției pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului din Albania); s-a menționat faptul că există state europene cu o situație bună în domeniu, de regulă (cazul țărilor scandinave) datorită alocării multianuale a unor investiții consistente pentru copii; s-a remarcat importanța prevenției și dificultatea prelevării de date corecte de specialitate.

Doamna deputat Podașcă a concluzionat secțiunea de lucru și dezbateri apreciind că acestea vor ajuta pentru ca cele mai bune exemple de politici sociale să poată fi aplicate cu succes în mai multe state din Europa de Sud-Est, în acest sens un prim pas putând fi o strategie regională comună centrată pe interesul superior al copilului.

Președinta Comisiei a apreciat calitatea prezentărilor, elementele utile rezultate din dezbateri și din intervenții și a mulțumit tuturor participanților și, în mod special, celor doi vorbitori tematici pentru sprijinul extrem de util acordat.

S-a trecut apoi la dezbaterile documentelor spuse spre adoptare atenției reuniunii singura adăugire fiind urmare a propunerii părții albaneze de completare a punctului 8 din secțiunea operativă a proiectului de Rezoluție. Neexistând alte observații față de versiunile consolidate ale acestor două documente avansate de partea română, cu unanimitatea celor prezenți au fost adoptate un Raport, document cu rol preponderent descriptiv privind domeniul tematic dezbătut, și o Rezoluție (*anexate*) care vor fi avansate spre a fi considerate următoarei Sesiuni plenare a AP SEECP care va avea loc la Tirana în luna mai a acestui an.

Rezoluția îndeamnă statele participante să promoveze drepturile copilului ca o prioritate în politicile naționale, regionale și de coeziune. De asemenea, propune revizuirea constantă a cadrului legislativ din domeniul protecției copilului, astfel încât să se realizeze o aliniere a statelor participante la SEECP la normele internaționale și regionale. Mai mult, parlamentele statelor participante sunt încurajate să configureze bugetele naționale pentru a veni în întâmpinarea nevoilor copiilor și a reflecta interesele specifice ale acestora. Nu în ultimul rând, recomandă ca statele participante să împărtășească experiența dobândită în atragerea de fonduri europene și să facă schimb de bune practici în domeniul incluziunii sociale.

Luările de poziție ale participanților arată că reuniunea a constituit un succes deoarece a pus în practică angajamentul asumat de către partea română, pentru primul mandat din perioada tranzitorie a AP SEECP, privind asigurarea cadrului logistic necesar și a altor condiții pentru buna funcționare a Comisiei generale pentru dezvoltare socială, educație, cercetare și știință a AP SEECP, mai ales că aceasta a survenit într-un context complicat și sensibil marcat, între altele, de unele dispute privind soluționarea problemei mai vechi a Secretariatului și bugetului Adunării și a celei privind modalitatea de participare al Priștinei la activitățile din formatul AP SEECP.


Deputat Gabriela-Maria Podașcă

Red: M.R.

- Bucharest, Palace of Parliament, 26-27 February 2015 -

REPORT

on

**“PREVENTING THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN AT RISK:
AN INVESTMENT IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT”**

Rapporteur: Ms. Gabriela PODAȘCĂ, Bucharest

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 1996, the South-East European Cooperation Process was launched in Sofia with the adoption of the Declaration on Good-Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans¹. One of the four priorities outlined in the Sofia Declaration stresses the importance of social and cultural development: Promotion of humanitarian cooperation by improving social and cultural communication between countries. This principle includes the need to coordinate our national policies in order to combat poverty and social exclusion.

2. Child poverty and social exclusion has been a worldwide phenomenon over the last few decades, Eurostat² figures estimating that more than one in four children are experiencing poverty and social exclusion. The study also confirms that children growing up in poverty and social exclusion are less likely to do well in school, be healthy and reach their full potential in life. By the time they reach adulthood, they are at a higher risk of becoming unemployed, poor and socially excluded. The reality is that children facing poverty are deprived of their fundamental rights as stated in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3. We have recently celebrated twenty five years since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the 20th of November 1989. Since then, significant progress has been made concerning the rights of children, as many countries have used this convention to improve their national legislation and adopt new policies in this field. As a result, we can state that the lives of children worldwide have improved in the last 25 years. Nevertheless, millions of children throughout the world continue to be on the verge of social exclusion due to abuse, exploitation, low-quality housing, poor nutrition, inadequate, inaccessible or unaffordable healthcare and education, poverty and discrimination based on disability, gender, age, religion, ethnicity or residence status. Therefore, SEECP participating states should undertake additional measures and make a strong commitment to ensure the respect for children's rights, especially the most vulnerable groups.

4. In 2010, the European Commission launched the Europe 2020 Strategy³, a set of measures designed to help the member states through the financial crisis. Aiming to bring at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020, the strategy is centered on the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Although many of the guidelines in the Europe 2020 Strategy have been implemented in EU member states, the social exclusion trend is not optimistic: between 2008 and 2012, the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe increased by almost 1 million, gaining about half a million just between 2011 and 2012⁴. Nevertheless, the target set by the Europe 2020 Strategy should be kept and, in order to reach it, national targets are necessary. It is important we address the manner in which SEECP participating states apply the measures suggested by the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Commission Recommendation. Our aim is not to assess and prioritize the efforts made by SEECP participating states in implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy, but to learn from each other's experience and exchange examples of good practice.

5. Regardless of our status as EU members or non-members, child poverty and social exclusion has affected all countries especially in the context of the financial and economic crisis. The causes of this phenomenon vary according to the socio-economic climate of each country. The fact that some SEECP participating states are a part of the EU has offered us a series of useful tools, which have proven effective in combating child poverty. The best example is the EU Funds absorption, which can greatly contribute to regional cohesion. KPMG's latest report on European funds⁵ shows that,

¹ 7th July, 1996

² Eurostat 2011, data available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion

³ More about the Europe 2020 Strategy can be found on the European Commission's website at: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

⁴ Save the Children, "Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe: A matter of children's rights", 2014.

⁵ KPMG, "EU Funds in Central and Eastern Europe – Progress Report 2007-2013", 2014, available at <http://www.kpmg.com/SI/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/EU-Funds-in-Central-and-Eastern-Europe.pdf>

after the 2007-2013 programming period, the ten Central and Eastern European countries under assessment⁶ contracted 98% of the allocated budget. These funds have boosted their economic performance⁷ and have significantly supported regional cohesion. We, as SEECP participating states, must share our experience regarding the effective utilization of EU support, so that the entire region develops.

6. When tackling children's rights, we should focus on the impact these measures have on the day-to-day life of children. According to the European Commission Synthesis Report "*Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage*"⁸, it is precisely this impact that has been insufficiently taken into account so far. The document also shows that it is exactly those countries with high rates of child poverty or social exclusion that haven't succeeded to protect children from the impact of the crisis. For example, in the midst of the economic and financial crisis, many states have adopted austerity measures and have cut down on services for children and their families. Such short term approaches conflict with the philosophy of investing in children stated by the European Commission's Recommendation⁹ and are oblivious of the principle of the "child's best interests" enshrined in the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child (para.2) and reaffirmed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art.3, para.1)¹⁰. Therefore, an effective implementation of child related policies in the SEECP region requires political will and a common vision, which places the rights of the child at the heart of decision-making. In this regard, it is essential that children's rights and needs are sheltered from austerity measures and any other policies with potentially negative effects.

7. The present report aims to go beyond a general framework, beyond simply stating the issues. In order to efficiently apply the rights perspective to policymaking, we must take the next step and not only understand the difficulties children face, but also find and implement adequate measures. As experience has shown, it is not an easy task to apply sustainable and well-coordinated measures. Our goal is to submit specific recommendations and integrate them into a regional and long-term approach.

8. In this context, during the constitutive meeting of the SEECP PA Committee for Social Development, Education, Research and Science held on May 11, 2014, it was decided to focus on "Preventing the social exclusion of children at risk: an investment in regional development" as the main theme of the Meeting, to be held in Bucharest, on 26-27 February 2015. Contributions to the Report were received from the national delegations of _____. Reference material was also obtained from the official websites of EU, Council of Europe, UNICEF and other relevant international organizations.

II. THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN AT RISK – AN OVERVIEW OF THE SEECP REGION

1. The financial and economic crisis has had a disproportionate impact on children in the SEECP region, with austerity measures cutting down support for children and their families. As highlighted in the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) 2014 Report¹¹, the national governments' decision to cut rather than invest in early years has turned children into the "unintentional victims of the failings of the political and economic system."¹² As a result of austerity policies and recession, the trend of

⁶ Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

⁷ EU SCF, accounting for 11,3% up to 25% of their annual GDP

⁸ European Commission Synthesis Report "*Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage - A study of national policies*", Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, April 2014.

⁹ Commission Recommendation "*Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage*" published in February 2013 as part of the Social Investment Package for Growth and Cohesion (SIP).

¹⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 20, 1989, art.3, para.1.

¹¹ European Public Health Alliance, "*Growing up in the unhappy shadow of the economic crisis: Mental health and well-being of the European child and adolescent population*", November 2014, available at http://www.ephah.org/IMG/pdf/EPHA_Report_Mental_Health_Child_and_Adolescent_Population_Economic_Crisis.pdf

¹² Ibidem, page 4.

increased social exclusion continues, especially in the newer EU member states. Children are particularly vulnerable to deprivation of their specific needs. They cannot be regarded as full economic agents exercising consumer sovereignty: they are not able to secure their own income/resources until a certain age and they are not sovereign in making consumption decisions. They are usually the weaker parties in the household. Moreover, for the fulfillment of their basic needs they have to rely more than adults on the production of goods and services by public authorities.

2. UNICEF latest Global report¹³ show that roughly 18,000 children under 5 years old die every day, most of whom located in areas that are cut off from services because of poverty or geography. These children are deprived of their fundamental right to survive and develop, but many more are exposed to poverty, malnutrition, poor health, unsuitable home environment, lack of education, having their cognitive, motor and social-emotional development impaired. Overall, studies show that children are the most vulnerable parties in the household, with risk-of-poverty rates higher than any other age group.

According to the Report Card issued by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in 2014 the economic crisis and recession made that over 76.5 million children live in poverty in the 41 most affluent countries. The recession has hit young people extremely hard, with the NEET (not in education, employment or training) rate rising dramatically in many countries. In the EU, 7.5 million young people (almost the population of Switzerland) were NEET in 2013 – nearly a million more than in 2008. Moreover, recent surveys¹⁴ reveal that almost 27 million children in Europe are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

3. As far as the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy goes, most member states haven't granted due importance to the social inclusion and well-being of children. In most cases, National Reform Programs have focused on educational disadvantages and parents' participation in the labour market, not paying enough attention to income support and access to services.

4. Children experience different levels of social exclusion and are faced with a wide range of difficulties associated with this phenomenon. Some are more affected than others and this calls for a clear overview of the main categories of vulnerable children:

- Children growing up with a lone parent. According to Eurostat, 18% of children growing up with a single parent were severely materially deprived¹⁵.
- Children living in households with a high risk of poverty. Studies¹⁶ show that 30 % of households with two adults with three or more dependent children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
- Children from households with migrant background. In 2011, one child in three with a migrant background was at risk of poverty, according to Eurostat¹⁷.
- Street and homeless children. According to global reports, there are around 100 million children living in the streets today.
- Children with disabilities. According to the Global Burden of Disease, there are approximately 95 million children with disabilities (5.1% of all children), 13 million of them with "severe disability".

¹³ UNICEF, "The State of the World's Children 2014 In Numbers: Every Child Counts", New York, 2014.

¹⁴ 2013 Eurostat data

¹⁵ [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#Single_parents_and_large_households_with_dependent_children.C2.A0)

[explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#Single_parents_and_large_households_with_dependent_children.C2.A0](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#Single_parents_and_large_households_with_dependent_children.C2.A0)

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Eurostat Newsrelease, February 2013, available at:

http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCkQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Feuropa.eu%2Frapid%2Fpress-release_STAT-13-28_en.pdf&ei=ENG2VLKwKsH5yQOOx4BQ&usg=AFQjCNF29cOgmWeA2vCrl_Jm4unawh_qbA&bvm=bv.83640239.d.bGQ

- Children from minority and ethnic groups. For example, according to a United Nations Development Program published in 2003, infant mortality rates among the Roma populations were double compared to those of the non-Roma.
- Children at risk in the rural area. Reports¹⁸ show that poverty in rural areas has the greatest impact on children, especially in Eastern countries.

5. Children are not to be regarded in isolation, but in a family context, in a social environment. In order to better address children at risk, it should be tackled from a multitude of angles: poverty, social services, education, work and family policies, healthcare, environment and housing, children's participation. A successful approach is finding a balance between universal and targeted interventions, sustainability and participatory processes. Recommendations: employment policies for parents, tax-benefit systems, quality child care, education, protection of children's rights, equal opportunities and family policies.

For example, addressing early childhood and supporting families in high-risk conditions can create lasting benefits in several areas: child development, health, and protection. Giving adequate attention to adolescents and young people can also help the transition to active life and prevent the risks that are today widespread among them.

III. POLICY RESPONSES

The state plays a critical role in creating an environment to fulfill children's rights. The best course of action as suggested by the Save the Children Child Rights Governance Initiative¹⁹ is to develop context-specific, child-sensitive policies based on evidence and which address precise areas where children's rights are affected. According to Article 4 of the UNCRC, signatory countries are bound to undertake all measures in order to respect children's rights.²⁰

1. POVERTY. Research shows that poverty is the greatest threat to children's well being (physical, mental and social dimensions). Taking into consideration the fact that the unemployment rate of the EU28 has increased from 7.2% in 2007 to 11% in 2013, poverty among children has become a pressing issue. The numbers revealed by the 2014 European Public Health Alliance Report²¹ are quite alarming: in 2008, approximately 9.5 million children in 30 European countries were living in severe material deprivation, but only 4 years later, in 2012, this number had reached 11.1 million.

A child growing up in poverty and more likely to become socially excluded adults, trapped in a cycle that is frequently passed on to the next generation. Policies to alleviate child poverty are nothing short of a social investment, which will lead to economic growth and social cohesion. Experience has proven that the benefits of investing in children services are higher than the benefits of most public projects.²²

Recommended course of action:

- Setting up a minimum social services package for children at risk and their families, complementary to the social benefits offered to them;
- Developing integrated community services. A successful model of integrated community based social services is the Minimum Package of Services for children at risk, which enables

¹⁸ POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN RURAL AREAS, FINAL STUDY REPORT, European Commission, 2008.

¹⁹ Report commissioned by Save the Children. Child Rights Governance Initiative, "Investment in children", November 2011

²⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 20, 1989, art.4.

²¹ European Public Health Alliance Report, "Growing up in the unhappy shadow of the economic crisis: Mental health and well-being of the European child and adolescent population", 2014, available at http://www.epha.org/IMG/pdf/EPHA_Report_Mental_Health_Child_and_Adolescent_Population_Economic_Crisis.pdf

²² Rolnick A. and Grunewald R., "Early Childhood Development with a High Public Return", Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank. 2003.

access to basic medical, education and social assistance services. Local authorities are encouraged to have a social worker, a community nurse and a school counselor in every community. These professionals must work together to identify vulnerable children, assess their specific needs, provide support and counseling and monitor their progress. The Minimum Package of Services is cost-effective and also offers more children at risk the opportunity to have their needs met;

- Introducing and maintaining universal and adequate support schemes for children and families that would include a balanced mix of prevention and early intervention services and of remedial interventions as described in the Minimum Package of Services;
- Setting up a financing mechanism for the integrated community services which ensures maximum coverage and offers children maximum benefits;
- Ensure adequate human capacity in order to implement prevention and support measures for vulnerable children and their families;
- Granting social benefits adequate to the specific need of vulnerable children: single parent and large households, children with disabilities, children living in poverty, children from rural areas, children from the child protection system, children with substance abuse problems, children at conflict with the law, street and homeless children, children from Roma communities, children with parents working abroad;
- Enabling children's access to the services and benefits they are entitled to by offering them adequate information and support.

2. EDUCATION is essential for ending the intergenerational transmission of poverty. According to the Save the Children 2014 Report "*Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe: A matter of children's rights*", 13% of children in the EU leave school after lower secondary level, in some countries the percentage of early school leavers reaching an alarming 25%.

The European Education and Training 2020²³ has set an optimistic goal for 2020: at least 95% of children under the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education. In order to reach this aim, member states should focus on:

- Making education and training systems more inclusive at all levels;
- Reducing school drop-out to less than 10% early leavers by 2020;
- Supporting children with special needs within mainstream schooling;
- Enhancing the quality of early childhood education and care: staff training and preparedness to understand and meet the individual or special needs of all children;
- Integrated educational approaches (social skills and child's participation) are more successful in the development of children's cognitive skills than models based on reproduction of knowledge;
- Complementary, we need to invest in the modernization of school facilities, as well as the training of teaching staff;
- Reducing the negative impact of cutbacks in education budgets on children from poor backgrounds;
- Addressing regional disparities and focusing on the disadvantaged groups.

3. CHILDCARE AND WORK-LIFE RECONCILIATION. In order to stimulate parental employment and therefore lower poverty rates, we need to take into account both active labour market policies and the quality of childcare (availability and affordability). Governments should support several childcare options and take measures to support women who wish to enter and remain in the labour market. Also, the cost of childcare is crucial for work-life reconciliation²⁴, often generating disincentives to work, especially for lone parents and second earners on low income. Therefore, a reduction in childcare costs should be accompanied with additional incentives for second earners. Also, employment law on parental leave should allow both parents to choose how to balance

²³ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/ef0016_en.htm

²⁴ The European Platform for Investing in Children, Barbara Janta, "Caring for children in Europe", 2014

family and working life. Regarding the large discrepancy regarding parental leave income replacement policies for men and women, as suggested by the European Social Network 2013 Analysis²⁵, we should encourage the employees who have taken parental leave to continue or enhance their pension contributions to compensate for their loss of routine contributions.

Other possible improvements as recommended by the European Commission in its Synthesis Report *"Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage - A study of national policies"* (2014):

- Targeted and outreach programs for single parents, jobless couples, parents from disadvantaged, migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds;
- Supporting parents' participation in employment or training programs;
- Assistance and back-up services for parents from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Improving access to information about programs;
- Developing services which enable balancing family and working life.

4. HEALTH is a determining factor for children's future and life chances. As reported by the World Health Organization²⁶, more than 160 000 children in the European Region die every year before the age of five, 50% of them in the first month of life. Although there has been great progress in recent years, disparities between and within countries are still an issue: countries with the highest rate for children under five years is 25 times higher than that in countries with the lowest rate.

As stated by the 2015-2020 World Health Organization *European Child and Adolescents Health Strategy*²⁷, countries should follow three major objectives:

- Promoting governance, partnerships and intersectoral cooperation (e.g. the Minimum Package Services);
- Strengthening people-centered health systems;
- Addressing social determinants of health and the equality gap for children, adolescents, parents and caregivers.

We should also coordinate our effort towards improving the access, affordability and quality of healthcare and the availability of equipment and health professionals. For example, free preventive and community-based health care should be available for every child and family: regular check-ups and home visits can identify potential health problems early on. In addition, an important investment must be made in public health prevention programs such as vaccination promotion, parenting support and child nutrition programs.

This constitutes a general plan of action, suited for a nationwide implementation. On the other hand, the disadvantaged communities and groups should benefit of outreach services suites for their needs (e.g. special initiatives for immigrants and ethnic minorities to access health services).

5. PARTICIPATION. We must support children's right to leisure, play and participation. All of the above are vital for the child's overall development because they enhance self-confidence, as well as social and civic skills. To this means, we must create more opportunities for children and especially for disadvantaged children to get involved: inserting such activities into school curricula and after-school-activities provided by the formal education.

Furthermore, children's participation in all areas of policy-making, which has an impact on them, should be promoted. As a general rule, the voice of the children must be heard in all decisions concerning their future. For example, the European Social Network acknowledges that children in public care and involved in child protection cases should have access to independent legal representation²⁸.

²⁵ The European Social Network, *"Investing in Children: ESN analysis of the European Recommendation"*, Working paper, April 2013

²⁶ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/child-and-adolescent-health/child-and-adolescent-health>

²⁷ World Health Organization, *"Investing in children: the European child and adolescent health strategy 2015-2020"*, September 2014

²⁸ European Social Network, *ibid.*

IV. SEECF FRAMEWORK

1. In order to develop cooperation among the SEECF Member States in the field of combating social exclusion for children, the first step is to exchange information and best practices in the field. Therefore, we welcome any example of social policy innovations that have proven to be successful.
2. We need to enhance our policy coordination if we want to see considerable effects (using an instrument like the EU Open Method of Coordination²⁹ in the field of social protection and social inclusion).
3. The major obstacle towards a fruitful cooperation is the lack of integrated and centralized databases on social exclusion in the SEECF region. Therefore, one of our immediate goals should be the harmonization and exchange of Social Statistical Data.
4. The SEECF participating states, which can access EU funds, need to invest more effort into spending funds to support social inclusion. SEECF participating states are advised to share recent developments and offer advice to non-EU states regarding successful programs.
5. Participating states are encouraged to consolidate the partnership with civil society in order to support more effectively the implementation of social policy reforms.
6. In all participating states the risk of social exclusion for children has been considerably aggravated by the global economic and financial crisis. Years after its outburst, we are still experiencing high unemployment rates, rising poverty levels, insufficient social protection, the gap between rich and poor families has widened, all of which have translated into a decline in child well-being.

V. CONCLUSIONS

1. A collective approach is needed to address the systemic nature of the challenge. While it is every state's responsibility to implement sustainable measures, we need a solid strategy and coordinated implementation.
2. SEECF participating states are advised to include the fight against child poverty and social exclusion, as well as the promotion of child well-being, in the objectives of all relevant government departments and agencies.
3. In developing, applying and monitoring strategies to reduce child poverty and social exclusion, a useful tool have proven to be the cross-governmental coordinating arrangements (e.g. a committee of officials from across ministries/different levels of government) which involve all relevant ministries and agencies.³⁰
4. Programs evaluation in several countries and national policies evaluations have been valuable lessons in addressing the risk of social exclusion for children at a regional level. To better understand the evolution of the phenomenon, committee members are encouraged to collect and analyze relevant data regarding the situation of children and also to identify focal points which require policy attention. To that end, we should monitor the specified issues and report regularly on progress.

²⁹ The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is used by EU Member States to support the definition, implementation and evaluation of their social policies and to develop their mutual cooperation. It is a tool of governance based on common objectives and indicators. The OMC process is structured as three-year cycles, leading to national reports which are synthesised by the Commission and the Council in a joint report.

³⁰ Integrated multi-dimensional strategies in the European Commission Synthesis Report "*Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage - A study of national policies*", Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, April 2014.

5. We need to find a balance between universal and targeted measures. Universal measures which address all children have the main advantage that they can reach a high number of children simultaneously. On the other hand, targeted measures help the most vulnerable of children and offer tailor-made solutions to specific problems which would otherwise be overlooked in the big picture.

RESOLUTION

Reaffirming the principles enshrined in the *Charter of good neighborly relations, stability, security and cooperation*, signed in Bucharest in 2000, as the founding document of the SEECP;

Following the Declaration on the inauguration of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly adopted on May 10, 2014;

Guided by the Rules of Procedure of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly adopted on 10 May 2014 which establish the functioning of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly;

In accordance with the Work Programme 2014/2015 adopted on May 11, 2014 and the Report of the SEECP Parliamentary Dimension Working Group approved during the Inaugural Session on May 10, 2014;

Recalling that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted in New York on 20 November 1989) and its Optional Protocols are the standard in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, containing a comprehensive set of international legal standards for the protection and well-being of children;

Emphasizing that all the SEECP participating states have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and therefore have clear legal obligations to protect and fulfill the children's rights within their jurisdictions;

Taking note of the General Comment No 14 (2013) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which enshrines the children's rights to have their best interests regarded as a primary consideration;

Taking into consideration the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child, adopted in February 2011, which reinforces the full commitment of the EU to promote, protect and fulfill the rights of the child in all relevant EU policies and actions;

Recognizing that the social and cultural development (promotion of humanitarian cooperation) is one of the four priorities stated in the Declaration on Good-Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans signed in 1996 in Sofia;

Emphasizing that all the rights of the child (including the best interests of the child, the child's right to life, survival and development, non-discrimination, the child's right to an opinion) should be fulfilled without discrimination (race, religion, residence status, sex, ethnic origin, disability etc);

Concerned that approximately 27 million children in Europe are at risk of poverty or social exclusion and more than one in four children are experiencing poverty and social exclusion;

Deeply concerned that more than 160 000 children in the European Region die every year before the age of five, 50% of them in the first month of life;

Acknowledging that the financial and economic crisis has had a disproportionate impact on children, with austerity measures cutting down support for children and their families;

Recognizing the significant progress that has been made concerning the rights of children since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, with many countries having improved their national legislation and implemented new policies in this field;

Welcoming the Europe 2020 Strategy launched by the European Commission in 2010, which aims to bring at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020;

Convinced that, while it is every state's responsibility to implement sustainable measures, we need a collective approach to the systemic nature of social exclusion among children;

Stressing the need to find a balance between universal and targeted measures – namely, policies that address all children must be accompanied by tailor-made solutions for the most vulnerable children;

Aware that the social exclusion of children calls for both immediate action and long-term solutions - early intervention weakens the cycle of poverty and deprivation, while investing in children prevents negative social outcomes.

The General Committee on Social Development, Education, Research and Science, which was convened in Bucharest, on February 27, 2015:

1. **Calls on** participating states to support the transition from institutional to community-based services for children, while ensuring their compliance with the standards of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
2. **Calls on** the participating states to explicitly consider children's rights (non-discrimination, the child's right to life, the best interests of the child, survival and development, respect for the child's right to an opinion) as a priority when setting the budget, programming and implementing national, regional and cohesion policies;
3. **Invites** participating states to enhance their cooperation with UNICEF and other relevant international and regional organizations during the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of children-related policies and legislation;
4. **Calls on** the SEECP participating states to monitor and report on the implementation of the European Commission's recommendation entitled 'Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage';
5. **Encourages** the SEECP participating states to take the necessary measures in order to ratify all the Optional Protocols to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
6. **Stresses** the need for the participating states with above-average rates of child poverty to set national targets and monitor progress within each vulnerable category of children;
7. **Invites** all participating states to consider providing adequate resources in order to ensure access of all children to quality services (childcare, education, health) and participation of the children in matters which concern them;

8. **Calls on** SEECP member parliaments to constantly review and develop the national legal frameworks in the area of child protection and children's rights, in line with the relevant international and regional commitments and with a view of harmonizing legislation that addresses cross borders issues; **invites** parliaments to see to it that national budgets respond to the needs of children and reflect their interests;
9. **Highlights** the fact that reducing the social exclusion of children can only be achieved through the development of public services which are accessible to all;
10. **Encourages** the participating states to share best practices and examples of social policy innovations that have proven to be successful in reducing social exclusion among children;
11. **Recommends** participating states which are members of the EU to share their positive experience in absorbing EU funds with non-EU states in the SEECP region;
12. **Calls on** participating states to include the fight against child poverty and social exclusion, as well as the promotion of child well-being, in the objectives of all relevant government departments and agencies;
13. **Underlines** the key role played by social partners, civil society and local authorities in promoting children's rights and encourages participating states to consolidate this partnership in order to more effectively implement social policy reforms;
14. **Strongly recommends** that central and local authorities in participating states find ways to increase children's participation in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity;
15. **Advises** participating states to raise awareness about the risk of social exclusion children face and to promote children's rights in order to increase public knowledge and understanding;
16. **Urges** participating states to harmonize their statistical data on social exclusion in an integrated and centralized database by: collecting and analyzing relevant data, identifying the main areas which require policy attention and monitoring progress;
17. **Calls** for more detailed impact assessments in order to determine the potential effects of policies on children's rights.



Parliament of Romania Chamber of Deputies

**SEECF PA GENERAL COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION,
RESEARCH AND SCIENCE**

- Bucharest, Palace of Parliament, 26-27 February 2015 -

27.02.2015

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the Agenda
2. Presentations and thematic debates
3. Adoption of the draft Report and draft Resolution
4. AOB



Parliament of Romania Chamber of Deputies

SEECF PA GENERAL COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION,
RESEARCH AND SCIENCE
- Bucharest, Palace of Parliament, 26-27 February 2015 -

26.02.2015

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 26 February 2015

Arrival of the participants and accommodation

14.00-19.30 *Registration of the participants at the Marshal Garden Hotel*

19.30- *Welcome reception offered by Ms. **Gabriela-Maria Podașcă**, Chairperson of the SEECF PA General Committee (Marshal Garden Hotel)*

Friday, 27 February 2015

08.30- *Transfer from the hotel to the Palace of Parliament*

08.50- *Registration (Entrance C1, Palace of Parliament)*

09.15-10.00 *Opening Session (Nicolae Iorga Hall, level P)*

Address by Ms. **Rodica Nassar**, Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Romania

Address by Ms. **Oana Rogoveanu**, Head of Human Rights, Protection of Minorities and Council of Europe Division, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

10.00-10.20 *Coffee break (level P) / Family photo*

10.20-12.00 *Working Session (1): presentations, debates on the theme "Preventing the social exclusion of children at risk - an investment in regional development".*

Presentation by Ms. **Sandie Blanchet**, UNICEF Representative for Romania

Presentation by Ms. **Gabriela Coman**, President of the National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights and Adoption, Romania

12.00-13.30 Working lunch (Brâncovenesc Restaurant, level S1, Palace of Parliament)

13.30-15.00 Working Session (2): presentations, thematic debates and adoption of the draft Report and draft Resolution

Cultural Programme:

*Starting with 15.10 - visit of the Cotroceni National Museum
Estimated ending hour 17.30.*

Departure of the participants

**SEECF PA GENERAL COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND SCIENCE
Parliament of Romania**

26-27 February 2015

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	Ms. Esmeralda SHKJAU	MP
	Ms. Petra BLAESS- RAFAJLOVSKI	Senior Advisor to the Albanian Parliament's CiO of the SEECF PA
	Ms. Ina VERZIVOLLI	Chairperson of the State Agency for the Protection of Childs Rights
	Mr. Genci GOLI	National Coordinator
	Mr. Dejan VANJEK	Head of Unit for multilateral relations
	Mr. Stefan KENOV	MP
	Ms. Vesela STOITZEV	National Coordinator
	Mr. Gheorghe BREGA	MP

	Mr. Jasmin BOJADŽIĆ	National Coordinator
	Ms. Gabriela-Maria PODAȘCĂ	Chairperson of the Committee
	Mr. Vasile Daniel SUCIU	MP
	Mr. Mario RUSE	National Coordinator
	Ms. Cosmina MOLDOVAN	National Coordinator
	Ms. Olena PAPUGA	MP
	Ms. Marija UROŠEVIĆ	National coordinator, Secretary of Delegation
	Ms. Jelena BUMBULOVIĆ	Interpreter
	Ms. Jelka GODEC	MP
	Ms. Tulay BAKIR	MP
	Mr. Fatih BAHÇIVAN	Staff of External Relations and protocol of Parliament
	Ms. Sheilla İAİA	Interpreter

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Romania	Ms. Rodica NASSAR	Vice-President
	Ms. Mariana VITANOVA	Head
National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights and Adoption	Ms. Gabriela COMAN	President
UNICEF Romania	Ms. Sandie BLANCHET	Representative
	Ms. Raluca DINU	Media & Advocacy Officer
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ms. Oana ROGOVEANU	Head of Human Rights, Protection of Minorities and Council of Europe Division
	Mr. Călin PRODAN	Adviser SEECp and RCC, Directorate for the Western Balkans and Regional Cooperation



- Courtesy translation -

S P E A K E R

Sarajevo, 06. February 2015.

Dear Colleague,

Allow me to thank You for invitation to participate in the work of the SEECF PA General committee on social development, education, research and science which will be held on 26-27.02.2015 in Bucharest on central topic *"Preventing the social exclusion of children at risk – an investment in regional development"*. I note with pleasure that meeting of this Committee is a proof that SEECF PA is well under way to become fully operational parliamentary organisation, as a joint success of all member countries which gave their contribution to the process of institutionalisation of SEECF PA.

Special impetus to this process was provided by your Parliament during the period of chairmanship, when PA SEECF was inaugurated and set of important documents adopted, including Rules of procedure. The Committee You Chair is one of the most direct and palpable results of that process. We entirely support your engagement and central topic chosen in coordination with your colleagues for the discussion in the first work meeting of the Committee, following its constituting on the occasion of the last year's inaugural session. I have no doubts that we'll continue fruitful cooperation within all working bodies of SEECF PA.

I use this opportunity to inform you that, after recently held general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the process of constituting of both chambers of PA BiH has not been concluded yet and therefore all parliamentary bodies and delegations are still pending, which also includes appointment of the members of the permanent delegation of PA BiH to SEECF PA. For that reason, unfortunately, we cannot take part in the forthcoming meeting on the level of permanent delegation, however, we do find appropriate directly to follow work of the Committee until appointment of our parliamentary delegation to SEECF PA. Having said that please be informed that meeting of the Committee will be attended by Dejan Vanjek – Head of Unit for cooperation with international organisations and SEECF parliamentary coordinator.

Dear Colleague, please accept the assurances of my deepest consideration and allow me to wish you and your colleagues successful work.

Šefik Džaferović

Ms. Gabriel-Maria Podasca
CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND SCIENCE
PA SEECF



Predsjedavajući

Sarajevo, 06. februar 2015.

Poštovana Kolegice,

Dozvolite mi da Vam zahvalim na pozivu za sudjelovanje u radu Općeg komiteta za društveni razvoj, obrazovanje, istraživanje i znanost koji će se 26/27.02.2015.g. održati u Bukureštu, na temu "Prevenција društvene isključenosti djece izložene riziku – ulaganje u regionalni razvoj". Sa zadovoljstvom primjećujem kako je sastanak i ovog Komiteta dokaz da je Parlamentarna skupština SEECP na putu da postane potpuno operabilna parlamentarna organizacija, što je zajednički uspjeh svih zemalja članica koje su dale svoj doprinos procesu njene institucionalizacije.

Poseban doprinos ovom procesu dao je upravo vaš Parlament u periodu predsjedavanja, kada je i inaugurirana PS SEECP, usvojen niz važnih dokumenata, a među njima i prvi poslovnik o radu. Komitet kojim predsjedavate upravo je jedan od najdirektnijih i najopipljivijih rezultata tog procesa. U potpunosti podržavamo vaš angažman i opredjeljenje za temu koju ste nominirali za prvi radni sastanak komiteta, po njegovom konstituiranju na prošlogodišnjem inauguralnom zasjedanju. Ne sumnjam da ćemo u budućnosti nastaviti produktivnu saradnju i unutar svih radnih tijela Skupštine SEECP.

Koristim priliku obavijestiti Vas da, slijedom nedavno provedenih općih izbora u Bosni i Hercegovini, još uvijek nije završen proces konstituiranja zajedničkih radnih tijela i delegacija PS BiH, što podrazumijeva i imenovanje članova stalne delegacije PS BiH u SEECP. Iz navedenog razloga, nažalost, ne možemo sudjelovati na predstojećem sastanku komiteta na razini stalne delegacije, ali smatramo potrebnim da izravno propratimo rad Komiteta do formiranja naše stalne delegacije. S tim u vezi obavještavam Vas da će sastanku prisustvovati g. Dejan Vanjek – voditelj Odjela za saradnju s međunarodnim organizacijama i parlamentarni SEECP koordinator.

Primite, Kolegice izraze mog iskrenog uvažavanja i dozvolite da vam poželim uspjeh u radu.

g. Šefik Džaferović

Gda. Gabriel-Maria Podasca

**PREDSEDVAJUĆA KOMITETA ZA DRUŠTVENI
RAZVOJ, OBRAZOVANJE, ISTRAŽIVANJE I ZNANOST
PS SEECP**



Parliament of Montenegro
Cabinet of the President

25.02.2015.

Dear Ms. Palade,

I would like to use this opportunity to inform you that due to the extraordinary Plenary Sessions in the Parliament of Montenegro scheduled for forthcoming days, Ms. Žana Filipović, who represent Montenegrin delegation to the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly in General Committee on Social Development, Education, Research and Science, unfortunately is not able to attend the Session, which will be held in Bucharest on 26 – 27. February.

Beside this, dedicated to the all activities within the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, Montenegrin Parliament will be represented through our National Coordinator in SEECP Parliamentary Assembly Mr. Jasmin Bojadžić.

Knowing the fact that the quorum is needed for this session of General Committee on Social Development, Education, Research and Science, please allow me to confirm that Mr. Jasmin Bojadžić can represent our delegation in his full capacity.

Sincerely,

Ivan Vujović

Chief of Cabinet