



CONFERENCE REPORT
CHILD-FRIENDLY VERSION

14TH EUROPEAN FORUM ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

27-29 SEPTEMBER 2022

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Introduction

EU Event on Children's Rights

The EU organised an event to talk about **children's rights**. Children's rights are promises that governments and the EU have made to make sure all children live happy and healthy lives.

The event took place over three days, with main sessions where everyone was present, and smaller **workshops** to discuss topics in more detail.

This year the event focused on how children can be better **protected** from harm and **have a say** in discussions and decisions taken about them.

A special focus of the event was **listening to children** and hearing about their experiences and views. To do this, many children of **different ages** and from **different countries** took part in the event- 12 children as speakers and 40 as online participants.

Some children spoke during the conference, **in Brussels**, others **connected online** and shared in the chat box or simply listened. They shared their experiences of being part of child and youth organisations and gave their thoughts on many different topics.

A special [page for children](#) about the Forum was created, with a [child-friendly agenda](#) and a [background paper](#) explaining the Forum.

What was discussed:

Last year the EU agreed on a plan on children's rights, called the '**EU Strategy on the rights of the child**'. This event was a chance to talk about how the plan is going and to share different experiences and points of view.

Each day of the Forum had a different topic. Day One was about **making the EU Strategy on Children's rights a reality**. Day Two was about **children and war**. And Day Three was about **joining up the dots when it comes to protecting children**.

Day 1 of the Event

Introduction of the Forum & making the EU Plan for Children's Rights a reality

Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission opened the first day of the Forum. She said, **“This is your world now and in the future. It is our duty to protect and include all of you.”**



She asked some of the children present, what they hoped to get out of the Forum. **Elisabet**, a fourteen-year-old from Estonia said that she expected **everyone's voices to be heard and to work together to find solutions.**

Iva, a young person from Serbia talked about why helping children participate is important. She said, **“Children and adults don't look at the world the same way and children can have different ideas. Adults can be blocked by fear when it comes to change.”**

Participants described in **three words** what it would take to get adults and children to work better together:



Session on the 'Child Participation Platform' which is a new way for children to be involved in making decisions

Children want to be more involved in discussions and decisions that are about them. The EU wants this too and has been finding ways to do this. One way is through a new 'EU Child Participation Platform' which helps to **connect with children** at the local, national and EU level. This way, children can be more involved. This session talked about the new 'Platform' which over the next few months will be designed together with children, organisations that

support children, and the EU. We heard about how the Platform will work and what it will do. We heard from children themselves about how they would like to be involved in the process.

David Lega, a Member of the European Parliament, said that **“Children are not just future constituents they are fully fledged citizens.”**

Charlie, a young person from Sweden, said “**Children already have a voice – adults just need to listen and deliver.**”

Camille from France said that information and documents should be **written in a short and simple way, so they are easy to read by children.**

14TH EUROPEAN FORUM ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD day 1 27-29 SEPTEMBER 2022

WE CONTINUE TO BUILD THE PLATFORM TOGETHER WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

WE NEED TO TREAT CHILDREN AS FULL CITIZENS !!! THEY NOT ONLY ARE THE FUTURE, THEY ARE HERE NOW

THE EU CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION PLATFORM

A HUB TO CONNECT CHILDREN PARTICIPATION SERVICES

SHAPE THE POLITICAL AGENDA ON EQUAL FOOTING

WE ARE THE FUTURE OF EUROPE!

PERSPECTIVE FROM CHILDREN

DUBRAVKA ŠUICA
VICE-PRESIDENT FOR DEMOCRACY & DEMOGRAPHY, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DAVID LEGA
MEP, CO-CHAIR OF THE INTERGROUP ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

VISUALS BY MARÍA FOULQUIÉ FOR [visuality](#) @VISUALITYEU

Session on making the EU Plan on Children's rights and putting it into action



The Plan on Children's Rights or as it is known, the *EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child*, is an **important plan** prepared by the EU to **protect all children** and make sure their **rights are respected**. This session was to talk about how important children's rights are, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic and in times

of war, like in Ukraine. The EU talked about how the plan on children's rights is going and what else needs to be done. We also heard from people working on children's rights and from children themselves what their opinions on the Plan are.

You can find a child-friendly version of the plan by clicking [here](#).

What was discussed:

- People of all ages and backgrounds should be given a voice.
- Children should be given spaces to share their ideas and better supported to do this.
- Information relevant to children should be shared in a child-friendly way.

Workshop 1

on what the 'EU Child Participation Platform' is and how will it work?

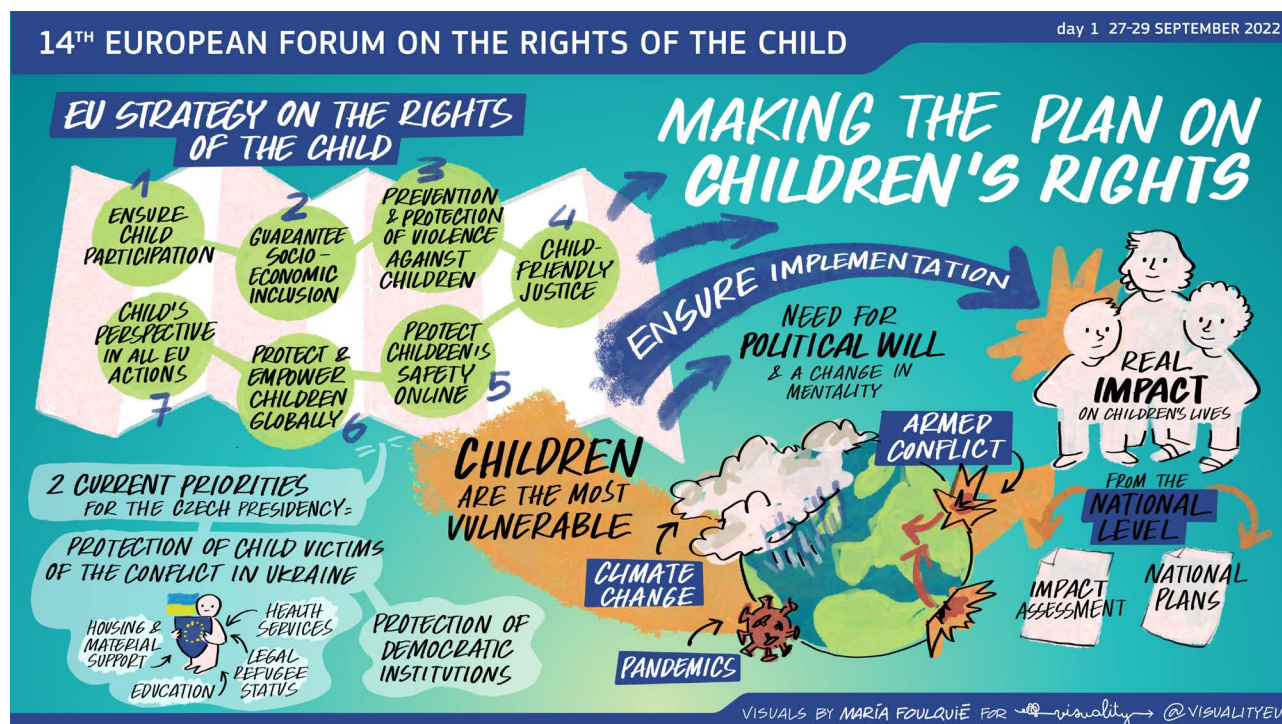
In this workshop, children shared their experiences of taking part in discussions about how decisions are made. For example, children who helped with the Conference on the Future of Europe or are a part of organisations for children in their countries. They gave their ideas on how children's opinions can be considered more and how this new tool, the 'Platform', can be designed with children in mind.

- It is important to connect with organisations that are already working on child-participation.
- Information should be presented in a clear and easy way so it is understood by children.



What was discussed:

- Adults play an important part in building the confidence of children.
- It is important to include voices of children from different backgrounds.
- Children should set the agenda for the new Platform.
- We need to talk to children at all stages in the development of the Platform (from its design to how it is made into a reality).



Workshop 2 on involving children in EU projects

This workshop talked about how children **helped make suggestions** on writing documents so that they are **easy to read for everyone**, including children. Children also shared their experiences of **working together with adults on EU projects** that are about children. We heard what they thought about the process, what they liked, and what they would do differently.

What was discussed:

- Communication *by* children *for* children works better.
- You have to talk to children to know what issues are affecting them.
- Ideas need to be communicated to children in a way that they can understand – use simpler words, shorter sentences, and pictures.

- The EU should talk to lots of different children from different backgrounds
- not always the same children.



Workshop 3 on helping children around the world, not just in Europe

This workshop talked about the **EU Plan for Young People outside the European Union**, or as it is known, the 'EU Youth Action Plan (YAP)'. The Plan is about how to **help children around the world**, not just in Europe. In this workshop, children gave their ideas and opinions about this plan and experts listened and shared their experiences.

What was discussed:

- We should recognise the important work children and young activists are doing in their communities. They are helping to build more peaceful and equal societies.
- We should see children as equal partners when it comes to making laws and policies
- we have much to learn from them.,,

- We need to make environments that feel safe and comfortable for children so that more children can participate.
- We should give feedback to children so that they see how their ideas are being put into practice.



Day 2 of the Event

Opening session on children in wars around the world

14TH EUROPEAN FORUM ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD day 2 27-29 SEPTEMBER 2022

CHILDREN IN WARS AROUND THE WORLD

CHILDREN are DISPROPORTIONALLY AFFECTED BY CONFLICT

WE CAN ONLY SUCCEED IN PARTNERSHIP

THE EU IS READY TO STEP UP ON PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD WORLDWIDE

CHILDREN are SUFFERING in SOUTH SUDAN

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

RECRUITMENT
RAPE
SEXUAL VIOLENCE
DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN AID
ATTACKS TO SCHOOLS & HOSPITALS
KILLING & MAIMING

PERPETRATED BY ARMED GROUPS & STATE ACTORS

EU STRATEGY FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

BILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS

TARGETED HUMANITARIAN AID INCLUDING SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

SUPPORT UN & NGOs TO BRING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

LOST THEIR FAMILIES
SUFFERING FROM HUNGER
VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

TESTIMONY FROM A CHILD FROM SOUTH SUDAN

VIRGINIA GAMBA
UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR CHILDREN & ARMED CONFLICT

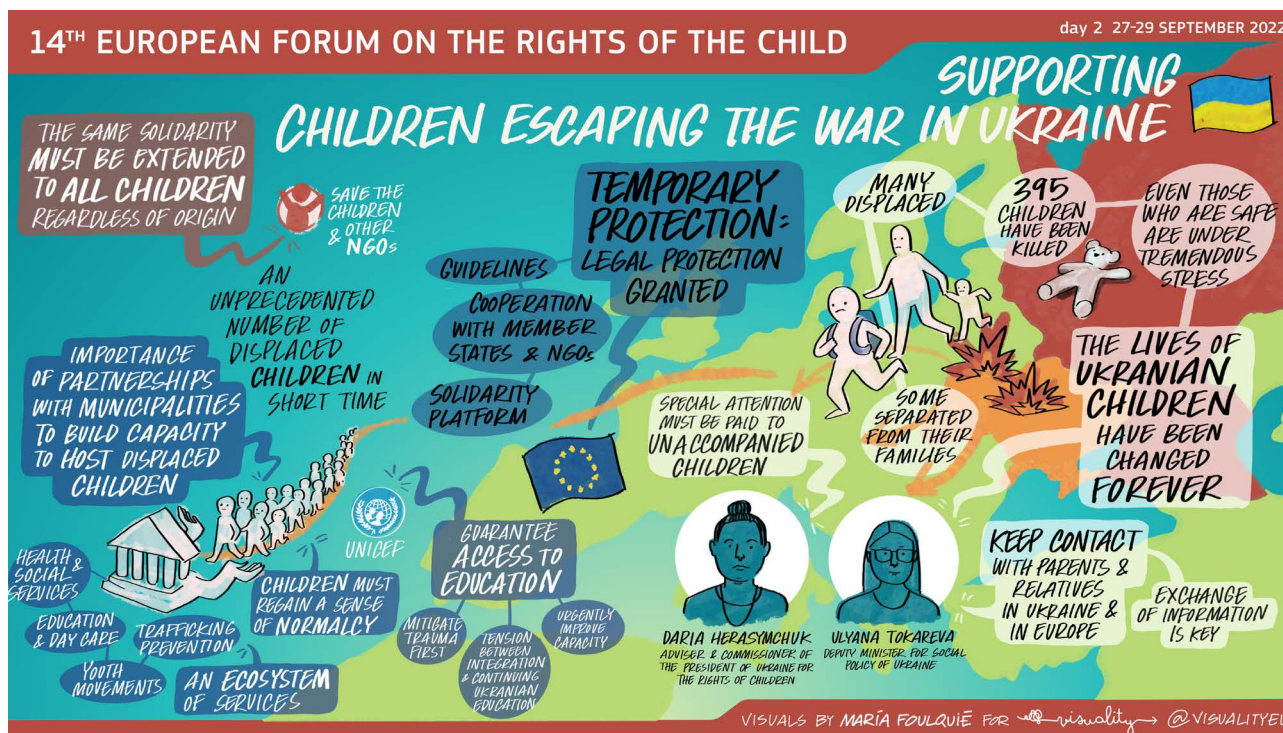
JANEZ LENARČIČ
COMMISSIONER FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

VISUALS BY MARÍA FOULQUIÉ FOR [with-visibility](#) @VISUALITYEU

This session was about what it's like for **children during war** and how we can protect them better. We heard about the different ways that children's lives are affected by war. For example, **Kiden**, a young person from South Sudan, shared her experiences growing up in South Sudan where the conflict has killed many people and left many children homeless and without their family.

We heard about **how the EU is helping**. For example, the EU is working to keep children safe from harm, helping with peace talks, and helping countries to rebuild after war.

Session on supporting children escaping the war in Ukraine



The war in Ukraine is having a **terrible effect on children and their families**. Many children have had to escape the war in Ukraine and move to countries in the EU. This session was about **how we can help children** who have had to leave their homes because of war. It also talked about how we can help children to **keep going to school**, and how to support children who have been separated from their families, especially children with disabilities.

What was discussed:

- Everyone, including the EU, the United Nations, civil society, experts, and children, needs to work together to protect children.
- Its important that all children escaping wars in their countries are protected when they arrive in Europe - no matter what country they come from.

Workshop 1 on protecting children involved in war

This workshop talked about how governments and the EU can **help to protect children living through war**. **James** from Sierra Leone shared his experience of being kidnapped by an armed group as a child, and his life after he was released and went back to his parents. We heard some examples of **how the EU is helping** to keep children safe and what some of the challenges are.



What was discussed:

- Be aware that children are affected by war in many different ways.
- Communities need to be supported so that children can be accepted back in after the conflict is over.
- Children should be involved in designing international development programmes.

Workshop 2 on including children in society and helping children with mental health

There is a special chapter in the plan on children's rights that talks about the **mental health of children**. Mental health is about our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Feeling safe and able to cope. This workshop discussed some of the **difficulties children face** with their mental health and how the EU and governments are helping with special tools.

- We need to do more to support children and make sure they have access to the support and services they need and deserve.
- Children's participation is important to make sure we are providing the support and services that they need.

What was discussed:

- Strong mental health is a right for all children, and it is the duty of adults to make sure children are well and supported.
- The world can be a scary place, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, and political unrest, and these worries can affect children in a negative way.



Workshop 3 on keeping children safe on the internet

Digital devices, like mobile phones and computers, have become part of our everyday lives. While social media can be a fun way to talk to friends, the **internet can be a dangerous place for children**. In this workshop people talked about **how to keep children safe** when they are using the internet and how to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

- More research is needed to understand why adults abuse children, so that we can prevent it from happening in the future.
- The EU is working on new laws to stop the abuse of children on the internet.

What was discussed:

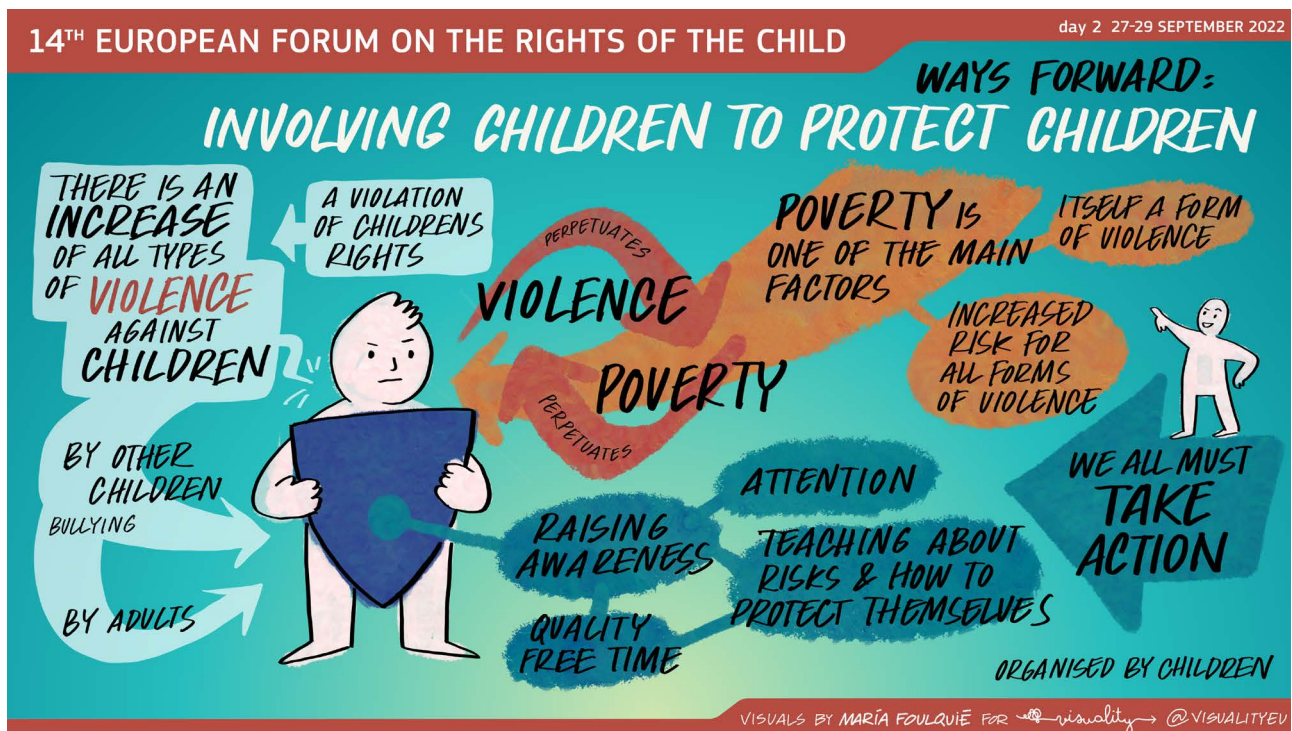
- It is unacceptable that children are being abused and exploited by adults on the internet - stronger rules and laws are needed to prevent this.



Child-led session on prevent violence with more child participation

This session was **designed and presented by children**. **Anna** from Greece talked about her experience working with a helpline for children. **Rayaa** from Ireland talked about poverty and how it affects children. **Mor** from Hungary shared some ideas on how to fight violence against children, such as sharing information on social media. **Jakob** said that children hurting other children, such as bullying and physical

violence, is also a big problem. **Lana** from Croatia talked about child-friendly spaces in her hometown and said that **with the help of adults we can create an environment where every child feels free to speak up and make suggestions on how to improve their communities**.



Day 3 of the Event

Session on working together to keep children safe

Violence against children is unfortunately something that happens in **every country**, in different situations and by different people. The EU has promised to help

to keep children safe and come up with special actions to do this. This session focused on how governments and the EU can **do even more** to protect all children.

14TH EUROPEAN FORUM ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD day 3 27-29 SEPTEMBER 2022

TOWARDS INTEGRATED CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

OPENING REMARKS

AT A HUGE HUMAN COST
TOO MANY CHILDREN ARE BEING LEFT BEHIND
ARMED CONFLICT
VIOLENCE
POVERTY
CLIMATE CRISIS

NO CHILD IS IMMUNE

INVESTING IN CHILDREN IS INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE
A BENEFIT TO ALL OF SOCIETY

AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK IS FUNDAMENTAL

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IS OFTEN NOT A POLITICAL PRIORITY

COLLABORATION IS INDISPENSABLE TO THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN
EDUCATION
JUSTICE
HEALTH SYSTEM
LOCAL AUTHORITIES

WE MUST URGENTLY STRENGTHEN OUR CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

THEY MUST HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE

NAJAT MAALLA M'JID
UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

CATHARINA RINZEMA
MEP, VICE-CHAIR OF THE INTERGROUP ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

CHARLOTTE CAUBEL
STATE SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER IN CHARGE OF CHILDREN, FRANCE

VISUALS BY MARÍA FOULQUIÉ FOR [visuality](#) @VISUALITYEV

Workshop 1 on sharing information when children are harmed

This workshop focused on **keeping children safe** and **what to do when children have been harmed**. It is important for schools, social services, the police, and the legal system to know how to spot when a child is in danger or has been harmed, and what to do about it.

What was discussed:

- People working with children, such as teachers, psychologists, social workers, lawyers, should work together to help identify children at risk and protect them.
- We need to do more to prevent children from being hurt, by talking about that with adults and children.
- We need to be faster at identifying children who are in danger of being hurt, and report cases to the police and social services.



Workshop 2 on trusted adults, or guardians, helping children travelling alone to a new country

Some children are forced to leave their homes and countries to **escape unsafe situations like war or natural disasters like floods**. Sometimes they must travel to Europe alone without their families. In this case, it's important for children to have a **trusted adult, or guardian**, to help and protect them. This workshop talked about how guardians in Europe can better help children settle into their new country.

What was discussed:

- Children should be able to trust their guardians and turn to them for emotional support as well as practical help.
- Advice and information from guardians should be communicated to children in a simple way that they understand.

- All children arriving in Europe, no matter where they come from, who need a guardian should get one.



Workshop 3 on Working together to protect children

A big part of the plan on children's rights is about keeping children safe and free from violence. This workshop talked about how children can be protected from harm and how the EU and governments are working on this.

What was discussed:

- We need to make sure that people working on protecting children talk to each other, to connect the dots.
- All children should be treated as full citizens.



Closing of the Forum

The Forum ended with a speech by **Liam**, a child from Scotland, who summed up the sessions and themes of the three days of the Forum. He said that he hadn't known what to expect from the Forum but **hoped that everyone would get the chance to express their opinions**. He said he and other child participants had felt **respected and heard**.

Ana Gallego from the European Commission officially closed the Forum by thanking everyone, especially the children, for sharing their ideas. She said that **children are the present and the future**.

