



## WG Children and Young People

10 July 2020 - online meeting

### Meeting report

## Welcome and introductions

**Bianca Faragau**, senior policy advisor at EUROCITIES, opened the meeting and welcomed all participants to the first meeting of this new working group dedicated to children and young people. A total of **40 participants** from **27 cities** in **17 European countries** joined online:

- Austria: Vienna
- Belgium: Brussels, Ghent, Kortrijk, Bruges
- Cyprus: Nicosia
- Czech Republic: Brno
- Estonia: Tallinn
- Finland: Oulu
- France: Toulouse, Pau
- Germany: Munich, Karlsruhe
- Italy: Milan
- Netherlands: Amsterdam
- Portugal: Porto, Guimaraes
- Romania: Timisoara
- Spain: Barcelona, Madrid, Terrassa
- Sweden: Malmo, Stockholm
- Switzerland: Lausanne
- UK: Leeds, Bristol, Glasgow
- Ukraine: Kharkiv

## Brief introduction to Leeds

**Sue Rumbold**, Chief Officer Partnerships & Health Children and Family Services from Leeds gave a short introduction to Leeds as Child-Friendly city in her role as working group chair:

- COVID pandemic is impacting child poverty - parents are losing jobs and digital exclusion is a big issue
- 780.000 people live in Leeds (2<sup>nd</sup> largest city council in England) of whom 189.000 are children. 39.000 of them live in poverty (child poverty is calculated based on parents' income) focused mainly in the centre and south of the city
- Leeds is a tale of two cities - very deprived and very affluent, depending on where you live
- Leeds is the fastest growing city in the UK
- Despite the economic growth, Leeds has higher numbers of children living in poverty than other UK cities
- Leeds sees a particular need to focus on children living in most deprived areas
- **Leeds is a child-friendly city** seeking that all children and young people
  1. are safe from harm
  2. do well at all levels of learning and have skills for life
  3. enjoy healthy lifestyles (including mental health and nutrition)
  4. are active citizens who feel they have a voice and influence
- Leeds has over 900 child friendly ambassadors from business and charities to support city





## WG workplan for 2020-2021

Titus Carey from Leeds presented the workplan for the working group's activities:

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<b>Mitigating the effects of child poverty</b>	<b>Reducing the number of 'looked-after children' in cities (children in public care)</b>	<b>Improving social, emotional and mental health &amp; wellbeing of children and young people</b>
<b>How do we want to achieve it?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exchange of knowledge<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Survey &amp; booklet</li><li>◦ Meeting in Leeds (end of 2020 - tbc)</li></ul></li><li>• Policy focus: EU Child Guarantee<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Survey</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>How do we want to achieve it?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exchange of knowledge<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Let us know your ideas</li><li>◦ Webinar, study visit, critical friend review etc.</li></ul></li><li>• Policy focus: EU strategy on the rights of the child<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Feedback on EU Roadmap</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>How do we want to achieve it?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exchange of knowledge<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Mapping of existing initiatives</li><li>◦ Exchange good practices with cities part of these networks: European Youth Capitals and Child Friendly City work, including the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative.</li></ul></li><li>• Policy focus: Youth Guarantee &amp; European Pillar of Social Rights<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ City pledges to EPSR principle 11</li></ul></li></ul>



## EUROCITIES survey on child poverty

Bianca presented the new survey on child poverty and invited all members to take part in this important data collection exercise, saying:

- It is a unique opportunity to feed **your city inputs** into EU Child Guarantee and support the creation of WG good practice guide
- Survey is available in Word & online form: <https://bit.ly/surveychildpoverty>
- **One** answer per city
- **Deadline: 31 August 2020**
- **Outcome:** a published report with trends and good practices from cities

**Stefan Iszkowski**, policy officer in charge of the EU Child Guarantee at DG EMPL, European Commission welcomed the initiative of this survey. He said this survey is very relevant for the European Commission's proposal to develop a European Child Guarantee, especially learning from best practices, lessons learned, and progress monitoring from cities.

**Jacqui Jensen from Bristol** said that collaboration will be beneficial in terms of learning from each other, testing out ideas, creative ways of supporting children better. Real issue is how to build a cohesive city - Bristol has a real challenge of polarisation of wealth and disadvantage, esp. for minority/ethnic children. How to promote disadvantaged children to enable them to take advantage from city mitigation efforts?

**Hector Cebola from Madrid** shared that he is highly committed to these tools to study comparative actions. He found it particularly relevant and important to share information among cities on scientific evidence used for city actions/strategies on child poverty - how did cities arrive to these points of actions? As follow-up, **Jacqui offered to share Bristol's** approach to predictive analytics operating strategically, operationally, place based and targeted risk to identify vulnerable children in community.

## EU policy updates

Bianca gave an overview of EUROCITIES and EU most recent policy developments, covering:

- EUROCITIES strategic framework 2020-2029
- EUROCITIES campaign on city pledges to the European Pillar of Social Rights
- EU consultation on reinforcing social Europe
- EU Child Guarantee
- European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) for 2021-2027
- Roadmap for an EU strategy on children's rights

### ***EUROCITIES campaign on city pledges to the European Pillar of Social Rights***

Bianca invited members to join the EUROCITIES campaign 'Inclusive Cities for All' with a city pledge to the implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), with special consideration about principle 11 about childcare and support to children:

*“Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality. Children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.”*

So far, 7 cities have already signed pledges to principle 11 showing strong political commitment to improving the situation of children in cities: Leeds, Madrid, Vienna, Timisoara, Warsaw, Lyon, Hamburg.

Why join the campaign with a city pledge :

- Get recognition and visibility at EU level
- Get invited to high-level political event on 30 Sept with European Parliament
- Contribute to shaping the EPSR action plan and reinforcing social Europe and get your city invited to the EU social summit in PT in 2021
- Get better positioned to access EU funds (especially ESF+)
- Get the chance to mentor and be mentored on social policies through the EUROCITIES mutual learning program for cities

### ***EU Child Guarantee***

Josefine Hederström, deputy head of unit in charge of the EU Child Guarantee at DG EMPL, European Commission, informed that the EU Child Guarantee is just one of several policy initiatives that the European Commission is currently preparing to improve the situation of children in Europe and mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 crisis on children:

- EU Child Guarantee will focus on the children most in need to provide them equal and free access to services to ensure equal opportunities for all children
- Another EU strategy is being developed to improve the income situation of parents
- An EU study is running on the participation of children in the political life
- Another EU strategy (led by DG JUST) will focus on children's rights

The EU child guarantee is specifically relevant for cities due to the strong focus on access to services. The Commission proposed in its revised proposal on the ESF+ regulation, that member states should allocate at least 5% of the ESF+ resources under shared management to support activities addressing child poverty.

### ***EU Strategy on children's rights***

Valeria Setti from DG JUSTICE and Fundamental Rights at the European Commission presented briefly the roadmap for developing an EU strategy on children's rights:

- Communication of the EU strategy is expected for Q1 2021 structured around thematic pillars describing all tools in EU toolbox on promotion of children's rights, also concrete actions by European Commission and national governments



- A questionnaire will be opened in August, open for 15 weeks, to collect ideas, proposals and recommendations for inputting into this EU strategy. Survey in all EU languages.
- 29-30 September and 1 October: 13<sup>th</sup> Forum on the Rights of the Child held online to discuss future strategy and collaboration with stakeholders - invitation coming soon.

Answering a question from Leeds about how children's voice is taken into account in shaping the EU strategy on children's rights, Valeria explained that the Commission is partnering with nine child rights organisations to conduct consultations with children in the next months; and working with results of a lot of consultations that have already taken place, also on recovery plans for pandemic - e.g. with COVID under 19 group.



**Iris Schnattinger** shared that Vienna adopted in May 2020 its first '[Children's and Youth Strategy](#)' with the aim to make Vienna the most child and youth-friendly city. Among other things, it will anchor a children's and youth budget of 1 million euros for 2021 as well as a children's and youth parliament. The strategy builds on the experiences from the "Werkstadt Junge Wien", the largest child and youth participation project in the history of Vienna. Over 22,500 children and young people have been consulted to share their ideas and suggestions for the future of the city. The strategy is available in German [here](#) (English translation available soon).



## Discussion on policy responses from cities to COVID-19

**Sue Rumbold from Leeds:** COVID-19 has had a huge impact on children living in poverty and school closures has exacerbated inequalities in education. Problem of home schooling and working at the same time for parents. The pandemic may have had a lesser health impact on children, but in contrast has had a huge emotional impact. First few weeks of complete lockdown have had big impact on children, also brought to light digitally excluded children missing out on their education. Leeds set up a scheme involving child friendly ambassadors providing digital devices and internet - e.g. for refugees and for those fleeing domestic violence. Big drop in numbers of children going to hospital and acute care departments raising questions whether the city administration is missing anything. Parents have taken on more responsibility for their childcare. Policy response from Leeds has been centred around working in partnership with the volunteer sector (5.000 volunteered in 2-3 days alone), putting a big food distribution network in place with food vouchers. Sanitary products included there as well (period products for those who don't have access). Shielding of those clinically vulnerable - focus on those children and provided support for these families. Policy response driven by national government, very little ability to adapt to own local context. Online service was set up where children can chat with someone for online counselling, to cater to their mental and emotional health. Created playboxes with resources for creative activities, funded by child friendly ambassadors and delivered to homes.

**Hector Cebolla from Madrid:** Conducted representative survey of households during worst period of lockdown and found that children were the most affected emotionally, psychologically and income-related for households. This is a longitudinal survey, so will be repeated to the same households in coming weeks. City measures: moved every service online (pre-schools, school canteens, meal services) and great success in uptake of online leisure resources. Great numbers of children have connected (over 1,2 million connections to these services). Mechanisms of active participation showed that this was one of children's biggest demands for support and fun. Madrid has now reopened nursery schools on 1 July and summer day camps from 15 July (almost 2.000 places).

**Bieke from Bruges:** We provided digital infrastructure such as free WIFI and laptops both second hand and new. This we are now doing as a structural service. We opened up the public green spaces this summer in the most vulnerable district. There everybody (citizens and organisations) can organise activities for the neighbourhood, with extra attention to

children. We did this because there is a lack of services, day care and extracurricular activities. We wanted to break through the social isolation and give children the opportunity to have a nice summer.

**Eija Ruohomäki from Oulu:** the pandemic has made clear that collaboration is needed. Same impacts for learning and education. Very important to work on grassroot level and development with politicians. Quality criteria accepted guidelines for distance learning (developed with university) by board of education who also accept local curriculum. Free school lunch provided by law since 1948 - tricky in all of Finland how to keep that promise for every child in basic education. After a 2-3-week delay, we managed to offer meal packages that parents could pick up and warm at home. UNICEF Finland was working closely with us to make list of good practices in many areas (early education, student counselling, youth work, services for disabled children) - 20 page list to look at first when problem arose. Also have a wechat and teams group - good collaboration. We already had a system for lending laptops and tablets to homes in Oulu but there was an increase in the numbers of borrowers. Finland has upper secondary schools closed longer than basic education schools so there was a need to keep young people in good spirits. We created Academia Karanterium with some of the local celebrities like the captain of our ice-hockey team encouraging students to exercise: <https://www.ilmastonmuutoslukioihin.fi/academia-karanterium/liikunta/> <https://opendigi.fi/in-english/quality-recommendations/#more-1550> To mitigate child poverty, it is very important to have free-of-charge financial and debt counselling.

**Kasia Kruijer from Amsterdam:** The City of Amsterdam provided 6,300 chrome books and 800 wifi-hotspots, which were distributed among schools. Students could borrow these devices for as long as the schools were closed. There was one laptop available for each family. Parents in Amsterdam with children in preschools normally pay the fee depending on their income. The City Government has covered the costs of these fees in case parents do not receive childcare allowance from the national government. In cooperation with schools, day-care has been made available for children who were in an unsafe family situation. For children who had difficulties studying at home it was also possible to go to school for a certain number of hours per week. City Pass for low income families to go to culture/museums/etc. for free, was transferred online to enable free online museum visits, sports, culture etc.

**Joe Brady from Glasgow:** Glasgow's Children's Services developed a route map towards recovery in partnership with key partners e.g. social care, education, third sector and frontline staff. Despite children's resilience, there is no doubt that the impact of this crisis will linger on beyond the formal return to 'normality' therefore our psychological services developed an approach 'Recovery, Resilience and Re-connection' for all staff in schools and nurseries etc. Glasgow Life our cultural body has always had a host of activities outside school hours - holiday programme very well developed (and free) and moved swiftly to online provision. Part of the holistic approach was how families could play and learn outside. Holiday Hunger programme and school meals provision was our immediate priority.

**Ruth Inslegers from Ghent:** we work from an outreach perspective as we saw that most vulnerable children had issues accessing services. We installed youth reception desk in different neighbourhoods together with NGOs, open on specific times and communicated through NGOs. Also distributed leisure packages for children, but also linked to NGOs going from door-to-door, combined with questions of how families were doing and information provision on specific summer projects for children. Also developed book to collect bottlenecks and tried to establish partnerships more than before with more opportunities for the future. Bottlenecks also identified by NGOs and volunteers with joint discussion of how to overcome them, among them access to services, families from Bulgarian background did not have rights to get income and were in the informal economy - not on radar for social

welfare, but found their way through NGOs. In Ghent, 'summer classes' will be organised this summer through a combination of refining the school backlog with fun (learning) activities, in collaboration with the university. Additional activities for children and young people are also organised in various squares in densely populated neighbourhoods.

**Jacqui Jensen from Bristol:** Bristol did very similar things to Leeds with the exception of playboxes. The increase in domestic abuse has led to a political campaign to reduce domestic abuse. Our policy response in two ways: 1) build better for children - multi agency policy to build on our COVID collaboration to get earlier intervention to children and families in a coordinated basis and 2) the development of a 'belonging' strategy to counter exclusion and disadvantage. We are involving children: we have a local theatre leading work with children across the city culminating in taking over the theatre at Easter for a week with presentations from kids on the theme of belonging (aiding cohesion tpp).

**Karin Nordmark from Stockholm:** In Sweden, the elementary schools have stayed open. The high schools have been closed. The city has worked with summer jobs for a lots of young people and with more adult people working outside in the city area.

**Kajsa Magnusson from Malmo:** Malmö has quickly provided internet access to students who didn't have it previously at home. We also had a system for pickup lunches for students and our department for secondary education quickly identified vulnerable groups so those could be monitored more closely. Malmö has tried to keep activities free of charge for children open with regulations in compliance with the recommendations from the Public Health Agency - such as youth recreation cities, open preschools, free activities for children and youth. Many activities have moved outside to parks and recreational areas.

**Franca Locati from Milan:** taskforce Milano Aiuta of volunteers, private public engagement, to provide playboxes, food, logistical support for people in quarantine. Working a lot for early childhood services (serving 33.000 children) - made 70 digital platforms for personal support, with individual link and password for tailormade specific suggestions for a child by their educator or teachers. Pedagogical approach to sanitary laws, reopened summer schools for 3-6 year olds.

**Hannes Vanmeenen from Kortrijk:** With one of our partners, we have quickly developed a (portal) website where young people, parents and professionals get an overview of all possible support: <https://www.kzitermee.be/> (freely translated: "I'm stuck with it"). Critical note: requires an outreaching strategy with field workers and trainers to promote the website now. Sustainable because it will continue to exist and be updated in the future.

## Next steps

We will elect a vice-chair for the working group. Cities can send an expression of interest for this role via email until **31 August** to [Bianca.Faragau@eurocities.eu](mailto:Bianca.Faragau@eurocities.eu)

If you are interested in leading or supporting on activities linked to the WG's objectives please get in contact with [titus.carey@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:titus.carey@leeds.gov.uk).

## Final remarks

The working group chair, Sue Rumbold, thanked all members for their active participation and invited all to Leeds for the next meeting (either physical or online) in autumn.



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