

Joint Statement on Strengthening the Partnership regarding Ukrainian Children

Today, the challenges of protecting the rights of Ukrainian children were discussed between Oksana Zholnovych, Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine, Oksen Lisovyi, Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, Serhii Dubrov, First Deputy Minister of Health of Ukraine, Dmytro Lubinets, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and Camilla Waltersson Grönvall, Swedish Minister of Social Services, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). Participating in the discussions were Ewa Kopacz, Vice-President and the European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights and Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission.

More than a year after the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian children continue to suffer the consequences of Russia's unjust war. Children have been killed and wounded, traumatized, uprooted from their homes and, in many cases, separated from their families and caregivers. In the discussion, attention was given to the illegal displacement and retention of Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories and deportation to the territory of the Russian Federation.

Deliberations also covered forward looking topics, such as the need to develop support systems for families at high risk of social exclusion, including building capacity for prevention and early intervention, community-based rehabilitation and other social services supporting children and their families. The need for alternative care reform in Ukraine, including developing family-based care forms / solutions for orphans and children deprived of parental care and children in need of foster care, was emphasized.

The discussions also touched upon the need to include a comprehensive child rights and child protection reform in future reconstruction efforts of Ukraine. Recovery needs to be child-centered.

Building on the significant effort already undertaken by Ukraine to reform and modernize its child protection systems in line with global standards, the representatives of the Ukrainian authorities and the representatives of the European Parliament and of the European Commission discussed intensified cooperation between EU Member States, EU institutions and Ukraine within the social sphere.

The need to work together to strengthen the capacity to prevent child rights violations and to respond to child protection needs, in Ukraine and within the EU, was acknowledged by all participants. They emphasised that children are important agents of change and key to building our future. Protecting them from harm, ensuring their safety and well-being, and empowering them to succeed in life and to contribute as citizens to a prosperous and peaceful Europe, is a moral imperative and our joint responsibility.

This work starts immediately. The Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU look forward to welcoming representatives of Ukraine, Member States, EU institutions, international organisations and experts to Stockholm 1-2 June 2023 for continued cooperation on how we can support the reconstruction of a modern child protection system in Ukraine.