

The European Children's Hospitals Organisation (ECHO) welcomes the Commission's goal of "mainstreaming children's rights across all relevant EU areas of work." ECHO represents leading children's hospitals caring for children with complex, chronic, and rare diseases. We offer a unique perspective on the needs of children, young people, and their families, including the need to protect and promote the rights of children in hospital.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) establishes universal rights of children. The CRC directly relates to the design and delivery of healthcare, with specific implications for caring for children in hospital. Although the CRC has been ratified by all countries in the European Union, there is evidence that the rights of children and young people are not fully realized across healthcare settings. A study in Italy assessing the implementation of children's rights in hospital found implementation to be limited and varied by geography and type of institution. Similarly, a recent survey of paediatricians in Germany found that there is not sufficient awareness of child rights amongst those surveyed.

To help address this gap and assist hospitals moving forward in applying a rights-based approach to the provision of healthcare and quality improvement, the European Children's Hospitals Organisation calls on the Commission to ensure the rights of children within healthcare systems, and specifically in hospital, are part of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

It is important to note that supporting the rights of children in hospital goes beyond the right to high quality health. These include the right to:

1. Equality and non-discrimination,
2. Play and learning,
3. Information and participation, both at the individual and institutional level,
4. Safety and a child-friendly environment,
5. Protection from harm, and
6. Pain management and palliative care.

Some of the services that support these rights, like play or art therapy, are not always part of health systems budgets meaning that some rights may be less fulfilled than others.

- We recommend that as part of the development of strategy the Commission work with stakeholders, such as children's hospitals and the youth and family advisory councils within these hospitals, to systematically evaluate which rights of children are fully supported in hospitals across Europe and which need additional attention and resources.
- We also call on the Commission to ensure that research funding, such as Horizon Europe, is dedicated to child health services research that would support the design, implementation, and evaluation of new programmes aimed at supporting the rights of children.

Finally, it is impossible to speak of child rights without discussing the climate crisis. According to the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change, "the life of every child born today will be profoundly affected by climate change." Therefore, we urge the Commission to make the rights of children, and their right to the highest attainable standard of health, central to the Green Deal. Aggressively addressing air pollution, which is a major contributor to global warming and has dramatic and lasting effects on child health, is one way to do this.

Attached please find the ECHO Child Rights Toolkit that provides a summary of existing evaluation tools as well as examples of ways hospitals are currently promoting the rights of children.

About ECHO

ECHO advocates for children's health and their access to the best quality care through the collaborative work of children's hospitals.

ECHO Members

Barcelona: Sant Joan de Déu Barcelona Children's Hospital – **Copenhagen:** Rigshospitalet – **Dublin:** Children's Hospital Group – **Florence:** Meyer Children's Hospital – **Helsinki:** HUS New Children's Hospital – **London:** Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children – **Munich:** Dr. von Hauner Children's Hospital – **Oslo:** Oslo University Hospital – **Paris:** Necker-Enfants Universitary Malades Hospital – **Riga:** Children's Clinical University Hospital – **Rotterdam:** Erasmus – MC Sophia Children's Hospital – **Petach-Tikva:** Schneider Children's Hospital of Israel – **Warsaw:** Children's Memorial Health Institute