



DON BOSCO INTERNATIONAL
Salesians of Don Bosco at the European Institutions



Ministerial Conference on the Implementation of the European Child Guarantee

Friday, 4 mars 2022

Paris, France

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Guests,

Dear Chaperons and Dear Children,

It is a privilege to take the floor here today and contemplate the fruits of a long and enriching journey.

Indeed, this conference, especially thanks to you, dear children, is not just an event. This is part of a process, where you are partners and agents of change, not just beneficiaries.

Dear children, you are not just the future. Nor are your elders just the past. We are all in this together, now, shaping together our common future.

I would like to thank the French Presidency's team for investing in child participation, and for trusting in the expertise of civil society.

As Don Bosco International, together with SOS Children's Villages International, and other partners of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children, such as Save the Children, Missing Children Europe and the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, plus UNICEF France and SAMU Social, for all of us it was a pleasure to get involved in this challenge. This is part of our mission.

We have a very diverse and surprising delegation here today: 15 children from 8 EU Member States.

First of all, we prepared a toolkit for children and their chaperons to understand the goals and the scope of the Child Guarantee. Secondly, we had an online meeting with the chaperons only, to explain the preparatory process and to agree on the safeguarding procedures.

We then met children together with their chaperons twice. The first time to let them meet each other and understand the framework of this initiative. Then, each child was given some homework.



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They had three weeks to prepare the artistic contribution that you have just seen, and to choose what to tell or to ask you, honourable Ministers, in the incoming session.

We are finally meeting them soon again, in a few days online, in order to learn from their evaluation.

Honourable Ministers, please get ready. Children will be soon challenging you with their stories and their questions.

For young people, it is quite universally agreed that policymakers can't do anything about young people without young people. « Nothing about us, without us ». We need to make one step further and to apply this approach to children too.

This is feasible, especially with the support of civil society, and worthwhile. Worthwhile for children, as an opportunity of empowerment, of advocacy, to realize that they are right-holders. Worthwhile for us, civil society organizations, and for you, representing public institutions, as an opportunity to be really accountable for this Child Guarantee.

We hope that you will enjoy and multiply this experience at home. At the national level it should be even easier than at the EU level. This is not a cost : this is an investment.

In a time when children run away from wars and conflicts in Europe, we have the responsibility to provide them with a hopeful horizon : a society where all children are effectively included, protected and supported in their integral human development.

A child-friendly Europe is a spark of light in these dark times for humanity.

What would you do when everything suddenly gets dark ? Would you just curse darkness, or would you rather light a candle ?

Dear children, please let there be light. The floor is yours.

Renato Cursi
Don Bosco International – Executive Secretary