

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OF COFACE FAMILIES EUROPE**CONTENTS**

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A better society for all families!**Introduction**

COFACE was originally founded in 1958 as the European Action Committee of the International Union of Family Organizations. Over time, it gained more independence, and in 1979 turned itself into an international not-for-profit voluntary organization with the name Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Community, and now the European Union. In June 2016, the General Assembly agreed on a new name: COFACE Families Europe.

Recent years brought significant changes to COFACE's operating environment, its stakeholders and society in general. These changes inevitably have an effect on the organisation's positioning in the field, among other organisations and in society as a whole. The aim of this strategic framework is to anticipate the challenges posed by a changing society, ensure continued operation, strengthen our members and the factors that contribute to our success and create conditions that nourish social innovation. The strategy includes the key strategic policy objectives that will feature prominently in COFACE Families Europe activities over the next years and will be operationalized in annual working plans. In order to develop a financial strategy and membership strategy of COFACE, we have set up two separate and dedicated committees. The communication and advocacy strategy, as well as a monitoring and evaluation framework, are part of this strategic framework

A Where are we now?

I. State of play in COFACE

With 59 member organisations in 23 Member States of the EU, COFACE Families Europe represents more than 25 million families in Europe and gives a voice to their needs. COFACE Members respond at national or regional level to the needs of all families, as well focusing on families in a vulnerable situation: families at risk of poverty, single parent and large families, migrant families, same-sex families, families with a disabled or chronically ill member, families living in areas with limited childcare and health services. They also work on a broad range of issues such as safer internet, parenting, disability, consumer protection, Worklife balance and much more. Part of our strategy will include trying to extend the network further, bringing in more members (both from the NGO world and further afield such as universities, public authorities, social enterprises, and more). Finally, COFACE is currently funded by the EASI - PROGRESS programme - it is essential for the network to seek greater diversity of funding sources in order to function sustainably in the future. In general, as a network we should seek to ensure maximum impact of our activities and be in a position to demonstrate this impact (see outcome indicators below).

II. State of play in Europe

Social and family policy: There are a number of key EU policy and legislative frameworks in the social field which COFACE tries to shape and influence, aiming to mainstream the perspective of families. This includes the following: the European Semester (the EU's economic growth strategy, which contains targets on employment, education and poverty) and the Social Investment Package (which includes recommendations on investing in children, on long-term care and more); newly launched European Pillar of Social Rights which includes key long-term goals; the coordination of social protection systems through the EU Open Method of Coordination; and finally the newly launched package of measures on WorkLife Balance, which includes a European directive to be endorsed by European Parliament and Council of Ministers.

Beyond social policy: There are other key frameworks and legislations to monitor closely which have an impact on families, and which require COFACE to defend the general interest of families. This includes legislation on digitalisation (such as the future of work and the digital economy, smart work opportunities, the potential of ICT in social/health services, digital literacy of families, safety online for children, and the use of Big Data. Furthermore, we monitor consumer and finance legislation with a view to achieving more financial inclusion and data protection of families both in the real and online worlds. Finally, we monitor legislation on health and environment matters in order to reduce the negative impacts on families and children.

General political context: Until 2020, we are most likely to secure funding for COFACE activities. Post-2020 and with the current EU political crisis (linked to Brexit and migration), the agreement on a future budget of the EU (for 2021-2027) is likely to require very tough negotiations.

III. State of play of societal trends in Europe

COFACE's action is justified and needed in order to support the wide variety of families in Europe and address some of the current challenges that families are facing in Europe :

- The gender pay gap is at 16% average in the EU and the pension gap is as high at 39%.
- Only around 10% of fathers take up leaves to care for their children and, if after a childbirth a women tend to reduce the paid worked hours, men increase their paid worked hours.
- 80% of care or support to older family members or persons with disabilities is provided by family or informal carers
- There are 80 million persons with disabilities and 120 million older people live in Europe.
- The old-age dependency ratio for the EU-28 was 28.8 % on 1 January 2015; as such, there were around four persons of working age for every person aged 65 or over. With the cohort of baby-boomers reaching retirement age, this is likely to place even more pressure on the working-age population in the near future.
- In 2015, around 119 million people, or 23.7% of the population, in the European Union (EU) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
- In the WHO Europe region, 1 in 3 children below the age of 11 is overweight or obese.
- Cyberbullying has been on the rise. In the EU Kids Online study, it rose from 8% in 2010 to 12% in 2013.
- Overindebtedness is still high in Europe. The latest European Banking Authority briefing on Non Performing Loans still shows problematic levels, which is directly linked to over-indebtedness.
- Several reports from the United States, where the use of Big Data has been rising in financial services, shows that there are severe risks of financial exclusion.

B Where we want to go ?

I. Our mission: COFACE - FAMILIES EUROPE is a network promoting the well-being, health and security of families and their members in a changing society and serves as a trusted entity for family mainstreaming and for the voice/needs of families in the EU and beyond.

COFACE views the family as a multi-faceted and dynamic entity. Families come in different shapes and sizes and may comprise several generations. We achieve our mission through coordination between the COFACE Member organisations to assess the needs of families at grass-roots levels, to gather evidence and project trends, and to link these needs to the appropriate policy mechanisms at EU level, such as the European Semester process, the Social Investment Package, the Social Open Method of Coordination, the European Structural and Investment Funds, the European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as other key EU legislative and non-legislative initiatives beyond social and employment policy (gender equality, migration, education, consumer policy, financial services, safer internet and more). We do this by liaising directly with key EU policy makers in European Parliament, Commission and Council, as well as EU advisory bodies like the European Economic and Social Committee and the EU Committee of the Regions. It is also our role to drive innovation, modernize and rethink family policy by facilitating transnational exchanges and foster mutual learning on effective policies and practices between COFACE member organisations, aiming to support national and sub-national policies in the interest of families and building common positions. COFACE achieves this through the organisation of seminars, ad-hoc expert groups, EU presidency and other conferences, advocacy and awareness raising campaigns, on-line and social communication and dissemination.

As COFACE Families Europe obtained the consultative status by UN in 2014 we are since then recognized as an important partner to defend the interest and the need of families beyond Europe. We want to explore ways how to work closer together with the UN in the realisation of our mission. The recently adopted Sustainability Development goals 2030 offers us a framework and gives us the opportunity to play an active role. COFACE Families Europe must contribute to the design, development, implementation and monitoring of family oriented policies and programmes that are essential for the success in achieving several goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, such as ensuring healthy lives and promoting quality education, wellbeing for all ages, achieving gender equality, empowering all families

II. Our values: In a spirit of pluralism, working in the name of all types of families, COFACE Families Europe is rooted in a set of six core values:

Non-discrimination. COFACE-Families Europe recognises all family forms.

Equal opportunities. COFACE-Families Europe believes equality between women and men is a cornerstone for the reconciliation of family and professional life.

Respect of human rights. COFACE-Families Europe seeks to advance the rights of families and their members to a decent quality of life.

Empowerment. COFACE-Families Europe aims to give a voice to all family members as citizens, consumers and workers.

Social inclusion. COFACE-Families Europe advocates for the shaping of policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion of families and their members.

Solidarity. COFACE-Families Europe promotes intergenerational solidarity between family members.

COFACE Families values are an integral part of how its actions and activities are run, and how it works with all of its partners.

III . Our vision: COFACE Families Europe works towards a family friendly environment, enabling all families and their members to benefit from sufficient financial resources, available quality services and adequate time arrangements in order to live and enjoy their family life in dignity and harmony

We have 10 strategic objectives to achieve this vision:

1. Giving a voice to families in policy-making and implementation
2. Developing a network of excellence based on sound membership and partnership strategy
3. Develop a sound financial strategy, aiming for sustainable and balanced budget and for greater financial independence and sustainability
4. Promoting fair access to Services of General Interest
5. Building family-friendly policies and workplaces
6. Achieving an EU status for family carers
7. Harnessing the transformative power of technologies for a sustainable world
8. Supporting the inclusion of vulnerable groups such as migrants, persons with disabilities, one-parent families, and other minority groups
9. Promoting equal opportunities for all families
10. Promote child rights and well-being

For each strategic objective, the AC agreed on some key outputs to aim for under different activity pillars. See table below.

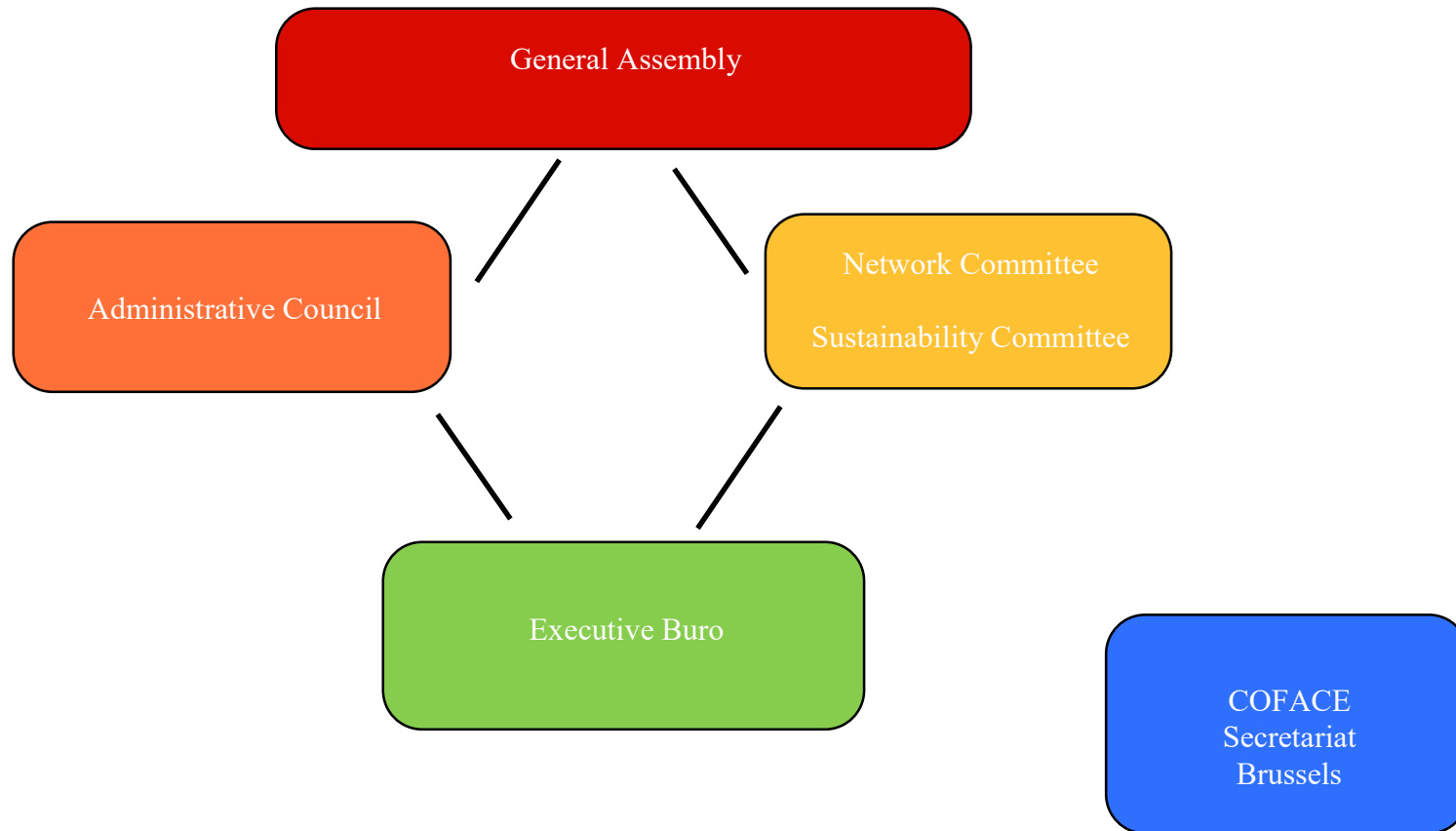
IV . Main policy areas and sub-areas covered by COFACE

While we monitor many EU frameworks, we currently are rooted in family and social policy at EU level linked to our funding. Which is why our European policy work is especially linked to Social Europe initiatives. However, the expertise within the COFACE network of members goes beyond social/family policy and is in fact very diverse according to countries and organisations. But there is broad consensus on the need to work on the following key policy areas to defend the interests of families and to link up with key EU policy and legislative frameworks in these seven areas which have an impact on the work of family organisations.

1. Education: ECEC, informal education, inclusive education
2. Migration: Family reunification, transnational families
3. Worklife Balance: Working arrangements, Services, Gender equality
4. Europe: Family policy, European Pillar of Social Rights
5. Disability: Desinstitutionalisation, Families of people with disability, Family carers, UNCRPD implementation
6. Digitalisation: online safety, digital future, data protection and privacy
7. Consumers: financial inclusion, health, children

C How we want to achieve the objectives?

COFACE Families Europe works democratically with sound and transparent governance methods, through two main elected statutory bodies: an elected Administrative Council and an elected Executive Buro (President, two Vice-Presidents and Treasurer) which deals with the implementation of AC decisions. In addition, COFACE set up a Network Committee and Sustainability Committee to develop separate membership and finance strategies. The General Assembly meets once a year. Since COFACE is a European organisation, it has a secretariat of 6 staff based in Brussels (Director, Finance Manager, Communications Manager, and three Policy officers) to ensure the operationalisation of the annual workplan together with the statutory bodies of the organisation.



With these key governance structures, COFACE aims to make progress on the ten strategic objectives above, through five main pillars of activity.

I. EU advocacy and Social influence

Influencing decision makers and the public is the very foundation of COFACE Families Europe as an organization. All of its activities share the aim that the organization contributes to social changes that improves family well-being. Through its development and its members organisations COFACE listens to the information it receives about issues of current importance for families in Europe.

- We advocate for families at EU level, mainstreaming their concerns in both social/employment policy and further afield (finance, economy, health, consumer policy, safer internet, migration).
- We build important alliances with other European NGOs to push our messages and shape policy and law
- We built capacity of national civil society to develop common positions and take part in the EU policy process
- We sit on EU consultative bodies and agencies

II. Transfer of knowledge

For decades COFACE has enjoyed a solid reputation as a trusted organisation that knows its business. Its strength is in the ability to support our membership to exchange information on their different national policies and support services to families, showing the value of Europe to drive innovation locally.

- We do this through internal expert groups to build policy/training tools
- We organize one big annual conference to bring together our wider community of practice (beyond civil society, to include universities, policy-makers, social partners, etc)
- We aim to develop annual peer reviews on good practice in family services provided by COFACE members

III. Research and innovation

While COFACE is not a scientific body, it contributes to research in different ways either building bridges with research institutions or carrying out internal consultations by reaching out to family organisations and families directly, to ensure COFACE actions are responding to emerging needs in local communities.

- We deepen cooperation with universities and research partners by inviting them to our key public affairs events
- We set up European research projects for the future, and continued to sit on the advisory boards of five EU research projects, ensuring the policy-relevance of projects
- We carry out data collection among our membership on different topics and carry out analyses on a variety of policy themes.

IV. Communications and network-building

COFACE is a network spanning many EU countries, representing NGOs but working closely with a wide range of stakeholders through EU, national and transnational communication, to ensure maximum outreach and dissemination of its work as a way to drive social change.

- We communicate Social Europe to EU citizens through our online social media communities
- We issue monthly newsletters with updates on EU news, COFACE news, and members news
- We aim to bring more practitioners into our international community of practice through our annual European conference

V. Training pillar: upscaling and dissemination COFACE values and resources

We ensure that the expertise contained in the network (both statutory bodies and in the secretariat staff) is fully known and used both internally and externally. Organising trainings is a step beyond traditional dissemination and an important way to bring Europe closer to families, as well as contribution to the implementation of policies.

- We organize trainings on the EU (advocacy, campaigning, funding opportunities)
- We provide expertise to COFACE members as well as external partners.
- We promote of COFACE resources (toolkits, policy briefs, apps, studies, and more)

D. Measuring progress to reach our objectives*I. Key COFACE Outputs*

Each activity and paper of COFACE is developed with a clear objective in mind, linked to the ten strategic objective listed above. Outputs can include the following:

- Events: internal meetings, public affairs events, statutory meetings, trainings.
- Policy/research: reports, analyses, joint reports, joint statements, common EU positions, responses to EU/international consultations, toolkits, policy briefs, training packages.
- Projects: EU projects.
- Communications: campaigns, online social media communities, newsletters, networks/databases, press statements, state-of-the-art website.

The Output Roadmap in Annex I gives an idea of the outputs we would like to aim for in the next three years under the different strategic objectives.

II. Key COFACE Outcomes

A step further than tangible outputs, COFACE strives to ensure the outputs actually have an impact by ensuring clear outcomes. These include the following:

EU advocacy

- Strengthened involvement of COFACE members in EU policy-making.
- Building bridges between COFACE and EU institutions to mainstream family issues
- Building and maintaining alliances with other NGOs

Transfer of knowledge

- Transfer of knowledge across countries resulting from engagement of COFACE organisations
- Consensus-building on family issues across EU countries, building a common EU language
- Consolidate the role of civil society organisations in the design and implementation of family policies

Research and innovation

- Building bridges between policy and research
- Strengthened evidence-based advocacy
- Monitoring and highlighting emerging trends across EU countries

Communications and network-building

- Growing community of practice
- Increasing outreach of COFACE online
- Building bridges between EU and global level

Implementation and trainings

- Building capacity of COFACE members on EU policy/legislation
- Building a network of COFACE experts/trainers in family policy and practice
- Consolidation of COFACE as expert in EU/family policy

To monitor the achievement of these outcomes, we have developed a monitoring and evaluation framework (see Annex II).

Annex I: Output Roadmap

2020 Strategic objectives	Pillar 1 EU advocacy	Pillar 2 Transfer of knowledge	Pillar 3 Research and innovation	Pillar 4 Comms & network building	Pillar 5 Implementation and training
Key activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Brussels-based events -Policy statements/briefings -Participation in EU policy/law-making -Member of EU consultative bodies and agencies -Build alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -One big annual conference -Internal expert groups to build policy/training tools -Peer reviews/peer evaluation -COFACE communities of policy-makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participate in EU research projects -Set up EU projects -Data monitoring -Collecting information on emerging trends -Family impact assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Build a network of contacts through conference networking -Website -COFACE online video hub -Comms&dissemination role in EU projects -Social media to reach wider audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -EU trainings -Promotion of COFACE resources (toolkits, policy briefs, apps, studies, and more)
Transversal objectives					
1. Giving a voice to families in policy-making and implementation	Maintain the position of COFACE in key EU institutions, EU NGO alliances, EU stakeholder groups, EU agencies, EU press, etc	Build a COFACE peer review programme for exchange of policy and practice on family-friendly policies. One peer review/year.	Set up a COFACE innovation lab to promote research and innovation in the civil society sector, to meet new and emerging needs of families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Build a “Friends of COFACE” (FRAMILY) network for individuals and partner organisations -Set up an intergovernmental working group 	
2. Developing a network of excellence based on sound membership and partnership strategy	Consolidate the European expertise of COFACE members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bring policy-makers (national, regional, local) into our network through relevant partnerships and through our annual conference -Consolidate the expertise of COFACE staff in different family and social policy areas 	Build a European family research alliance through our academic contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have at least one COFACE member per EU country -Consolidate our online communities on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Build a network of COFACE trainers/educators -Develop a European parenting academy (support and training to parents on wide variety of themes)
3. Develop a sound financial strategy, aiming for greater financial independence and sustainability	Build strategic links with Foundations, philanthropies and other potential funders/sponsors	Ensuring fully operational annual conference packages are in place	Ensure the COFACE secretariat monitors relevant EU funding programmes, to support the development of new projects	Develop a clear Network package of services catering for different types of organisations (members, partners)	Develop a Europe2030 diploma training package (on EU funding, frameworks, institutions, campaigning) aimed a local civil society

2020 Strategic objectives Key activities	Pillar 1 EU advocacy	Pillar 2 Transfer of knowledge	Pillar 3 Research and innovation	Pillar 4 Comms & network building	Pillar 5 Implementation and training
Thematic objectives					
4. Promoting fair access to Services of General Interest	<p>Consolidate alliances pushing for access to public services of general interest for all, highlighting the important role of the state in ensuring access to fundamental rights</p> <p>Consolidate alliances with organisations promoting desinstitutionalisation of social and health services</p>	<p>Guaranteeing access to basic financial services for all (including credit and insurance products). Building a fair credit-worthiness model to promote financial inclusion, both by inclusion of vulnerable consumers in traditional banking and by also promoting alternative models</p>	<p>Improve COFACE understanding of the links between social and consumer policy, namely in the use of services (user vs consumer of services social/health services)</p>		<p>Develop a European Nutrimedias module for use by civil society and academic institutions</p>
5. Building family-friendly policies and workplaces	<p>Build a solid EU alliance with civil and social partners, and build strategic links with European Parliament (preparing the 2019 elections), with a view to setting up a network of WorkLife ambassadors.</p>	<p>One peer review a year on one aspect of reconciliation policy/economy</p> <p>Develop a European Reconciliation Typology</p>	<p>European mapping of family-friendly company audits, with a view to testing the idea of a COFACE label for family-friendly companies and supporting the development of the reconciliation economy</p>	<p>Set up several national worklife balance alliances.</p> <p>Intergovernmental working group on reconciliation</p>	<p>COFACE Worklife training package for companies/workplaces</p>
6. Achieving an EU status for family carers	<p>Advocate for the idea of a European Care Guarantee</p>	<p>Revise and operationalise the Family Carers charter into relevant policies</p>	<p>Studying the legal and policy status of family carers in the EU (stocktaking on existing gaps and available resources, building recommendations etc)</p>		

2020 Strategic objectives Key activities	Pillar 1 EU advocacy	Pillar 2 Transfer of knowledge	Pillar 3 Research and innovation	Pillar 4 Comms & network building	Pillar 5 Implementation and training
7. Harnessing the transformative power of technologies for a sustainable world	Ensure full capacity to monitor developments of child well-being in the virtual world (impact of new technologies, etc) to protect and empower families	Develop policies which ensure digital data ownership and control, access to child friendly online services, and secure user participation mechanisms online.	Innovation lab to empower families in the digital world.	Building a consolidated COFACE TV as a hub for different types of video clips on family policy/services	
8. Supporting the inclusion of vulnerable groups such as migrants, persons with disabilities, one-parent families, and other minority groups	-Promote the progressive COFACE values of pluralism and non-discrimination in view of the 2019 European Parliament elections and rising populism in Europe -Consolidate alliances at EU level to support inclusion of vulnerable groups - Explore various connected policies which will help the most vulnerable such as the right to insolvency or online accessibility.	Build policy expertise of COFACE on migration, specifically on transnational families and family reunification of migrant families.	Collect evidence on emerging new family patterns across Europe (transnational families, one-parent families, etc) Collect evidence on the availability of community-based services that foster independent living of all vulnerable groups	Building partnerships with organisations representing bi-national and migrant families	Inclusive education training for teachers and parents (on human rights, tolerance, anti-discrimination and understanding of special needs such as disabilities)
9. Promoting equal opportunities for all families	Develop a COFACE equal opportunities charter	Ensure links between equal opportunities policies in Europe, and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (namely SDGs 1-5)	Develop a COFACE Diversity label for toys based on key principles	Develop a Diversity&Stereotypes network	

2020 Strategic objectives Key activities	Pillar 1 EU advocacy	Pillar 2 Transfer of knowledge	Pillar 3 Research and innovation	Pillar 4 Comms & network building	Pillar 5 Implementation and training
10. Promote child rights and well-being	Consolidate European alliances on the health risks of children (obesity prevention, environmental impact, and for investing in children	-Consolidate ECEC policies -Develop a policy model for Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR)	Research the potential of developing a European child norm, ensuring the child perspective is taken in policy-making and impact assessment		-EU trainings -Promotion of COFACE resources (toolkits, policy briefs, apps, studies, and more) Training on human rights&diversity in education (anti-bullying, disability, mental health)

Annex II. Monitoring and Evaluation framework

2020 Strategic objectives	Pillar 1 EU advocacy	Pillar 2 Transfer of knowledge	Pillar 3 Research and innovation	Pillar 4 Comms & network building	Pillar 5 Implementation and training
Key activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Brussels-based events -Policy statements/briefings -Participation in EU policy/law-making -Member of EU consultative bodies and agencies -Build alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -One big annual conference -Internal expert groups to build policy/training tools -Peer reviews/peer evaluation -COFACE communities of policy-makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participate in EU research projects -Set up EU projects -Data monitoring -Collecting information on emerging trends -Family impact assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Build a network of contacts through conference networking -Website -COFACE online video hub -Comms&dissemination role in EU projects -Social media to reach wider audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -EU trainings -Promotion of COFACE resources (toolkits, policy briefs, apps, studies, and more)
Outcome 1	<p>Strengthened involvement of COFACE members in EU policy-making.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of member organisations actively involved in lobbying/campaigning</p> <p>Indicator: Number of COFACE advocacy campaigns involving members</p>	<p>Transfer of knowledge across countries resulting from engagement of COFACE organisations</p> <p>Indicator: Number of members which actively participated in all COFACE activities</p> <p>Indicator: Translation of COFACE documents into other languages by members and partners</p>	<p>Building bridges between policy and research</p> <p>Indicator: Number of requests for participation in EU research project proposals</p> <p>Indicator: Number of researchers present in COFACE meetings/events</p>	<p>Growing community of practice</p> <p>Indicator: Number and nature of new members joining the network</p> <p>Indicator: Number and background of speakers/participants in events (government, research, business, etc)</p>	<p>Building capacity of COFACE members on EU policy/legislation</p> <p>Indicator: Number of members using COFACE tools and services</p> <p>Indicator: Number of times COFACE members represent the organisation externally</p>
Outcome 2	<p>Building bridges between COFACE and EU institutions to mainstream family issues</p> <p>Indicator: Number and nature of partnerships with EU institutions</p> <p>Indicator: Number of uptakes of family/COFACE concerns in EU documents/legislation</p>	<p>Consensus-building on family issues across EU countries, building a common EU language</p> <p>Indicator: Number of COFACE positions adopted as a result of consensus-building across EU countries</p>	<p>Strengthened evidence-based advocacy</p> <p>Indicator: number of COFACE documents which reflect current research in the field of family and social policies</p> <p>Indicator: The extent to which results of monitoring impact of wider policies and developments of families is embedded in work of COFACE</p>	<p>Increasing outreach of COFACE online</p> <p>Indicator: Number of new social media followers</p> <p>Indicator: Number of website hits</p> <p>Indicator: Campaign involvement from online followers</p> <p>Indicator: Visibility of the events in different online media outlets</p>	<p>Building a network of COFACE experts/trainers in family policy and practice</p> <p>Indicator: Visibility and take-up of the good practices of COFACE members by members</p>
Outcome 3	<p>Building and maintaining alliances with other NGOs</p> <p>Indicator: Number and nature of statements/declarations signed with other NGOs</p> <p>Indicator: Number and nature of references to family perspective in other EU policy/legal fields beyond social policy</p>	<p>Consolidate the role of civil society organisations in the design and implementation of family policies</p> <p>Indicator: Number of times COFACE invited to conferences/expert meetings</p> <p>Indicator: Number of papers/articles/presentations</p>	<p>Monitoring and highlighting emerging trends across EU countries</p> <p>Indicator: Number of reports collecting new data</p>	<p>Building bridges between EU and global level</p> <p>Indicator: Number and nature of activities involving international stakeholders (statements, participation in conference)</p>	<p>Consolidation of COFACE as expert in EU/family policy</p> <p>Indicator: Number and nature of times COFACE invited to give trainings (internally and externally)</p>

