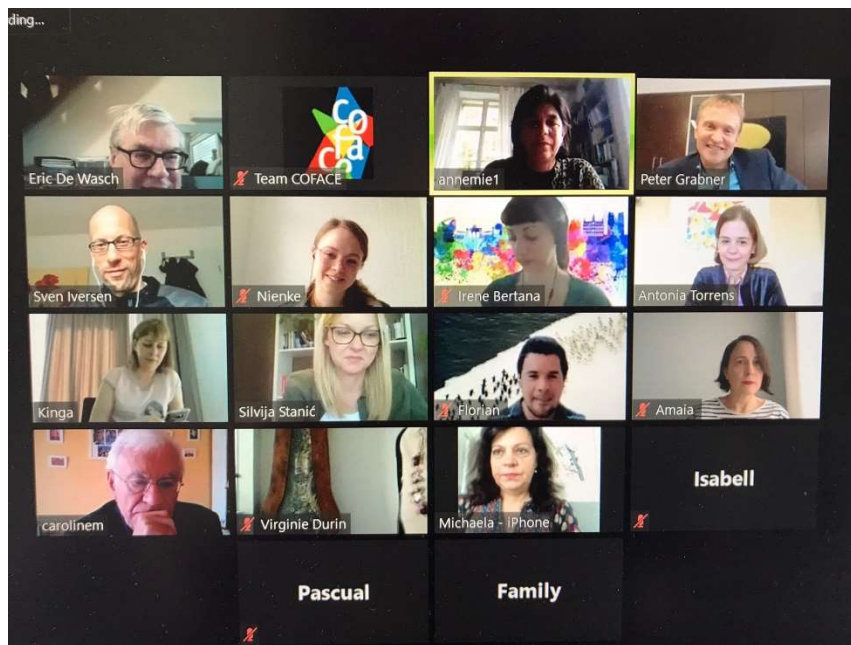


## COFACE AC online brainstorm 30th April 2020 – 10.00-12.00

### Summary and update

On the 30 April, COFACE invited the AC members for an online meeting to complement for the online survey of decisions and discuss the workplan 2021. AC members from several countries were present: Belgium, France, Hungary, Croatia, Spain, Czech Republic, Germany, Slovenia, Austria. All members of the COFACE secretariat participated in the meeting.



### 1. The 2020 events (different scenarios and possibilities)

<http://www.coface-eu.org/events-2/>

The AC took stock of the changes in the 2020 events, the shift online and the financial impact.

-The work-life balance expert meeting was held on the afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup> March to discuss the implementation of the EU work-life balance directive. Then followed further brainstorms with WLB experts in COFACE, with a focus on special COVID-19 related measures. A brief was prepared with an overview of some countries.

-The conference in Zagreb was shifted online in the form of 90-minute breakfast bytes, with 300+ participants from across Europe and beyond taking part in 8 bytes covering different layers of digital citizenship. The speakers and participants were generally very satisfied and there is discussion of using the breakfast byte format for the COFACE Digital Family Lab from 2021 onwards with one “byte” per month focusing on different COFACE members.

-The inclusive education conference in Monza was cancelled due to the COVID-19 crisis. COFACE Disability started having regular online meetings with the COFACE secretariat from March onwards when the lockdown started. They will hold a formal meeting online on 24<sup>th</sup> June, and there will be discussions on converting the Monza conference into an online webinar to be held in September linked to the “back-to-school” season. This will be discussed by COFACE Disability on 24<sup>th</sup> June.

-The AC members discussed the Autumn events, and expressed the intention to hold the event in Berlin on 28-29<sup>th</sup> September (AC, GA + Child guarantee seminar), as well as the expert meeting on vulnerable families in Budapest on 26-27<sup>th</sup> October. But NOE and Single parents Hungary were willing to shift this meeting online if helpful to the COFACE 2020 workplan and activities, or indeed to 2021 if necessary.

The financial impact of COVID-19 was also discussed. The underspend for the events in the first Semester would be reinvested in the Autumn events to boost them as necessary. If the Autumn events cannot take place, this will result in a bigger underspend. This would be a good thing since it will be tougher to meet the 20% co-financing requirements of 2020 without the money generated from participation in COFACE events. But we cannot underspend too much either. The secretariat will contact the European Commission in September once we have a clear picture of the situation in Autumn. In the meantime, the EASI networks sent a joint letter to DG EMPL asking for an increase in the co-financing rate from 80% to up to 90%. This would be a big help to the COFACE network and other European civil society organisations which are all under pressure following the lockdown impact.

## **2. Child compass. First brainstorm following the conference in Helsinki**

[http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/AC1\\_2020\\_ChildCompass.pdf](http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/AC1_2020_ChildCompass.pdf)

AC Members highlighted the needs of the children they work with directly and indirectly.

Czech Republic: regarding working single mothers, the programmes of W4W try to also provide day care. Regarding victims of domestic violence, it is especially important to also take into the suffering of the children since they are also victims and require psychological help.

Austria: this is about investment in our future. Issues like the digitalisation of families were raised and addressing the impact of digital transformations. Concerning income and poverty: the COVID-19 pandemic magnified great differences, with some families having no reduction in income, while other families are left with no income at all. KFÖ (Catholic Family Association) is in close contact with the Ministry for Family and Labour also offering a helpline [www.familie.at](http://www.familie.at). The Intergenerational aspect was highlighted as well as far more visible, namely the value of informal childcare by grandparents. The concept of family-friendly or child-friendly cities could be further explored in the child compass.

Spain: UNAF Spain referred to allowances for orphans of domestic violence as an important issue which requires measures. Other areas where UNAF Spain works on child health and well-being are education (sexual diversity + education), treating all children equality regardless of their family models. Finally, there was reference to the introduction of a universal basic income for vulnerable families in Spain – the main battle of UNAF Spain is to ensure this reaches all children regardless of their family situation, and that the UBI system is built on a family diversity model.

Germany: The concept of “well-being” does not translate in German. So when building the child compass it would be important to be clear on what this means, what we mean by health and well-being. The differences between children’s needs and family needs are quite different, and hence this child compass must be built on a two-generation approach.

Hungary: There was concern about the impact of COVID-19 on child poverty, which is already an issue in many EU countries and which will clearly rise as a consequence of the pandemic. The child compass should therefore build the notion of long-term impact on children. Vulnerable families are likely to increase (more than 1M employees lost their job in Hungary). The EU Child guarantee will be important as an anti-poverty strategy to support children and their families.

Single parent families are suffering at the moment, as well as large families. A differentiated approach would be needed in the child compass acknowledging the diverse needs of families and children.

France: There have been many challenges for family carers of children with disabilities, already highlighted in the COFACE COVID-19 statement. The family support dimension of the child compass would be important therefore. Further challenges include the digitalization of schooling/learning and the inequalities that have been magnified.

Greece: COFACE needs a new compass from what has already been discussed in child policy debates, a compass which takes into account these exceptional circumstances of COVID-19 – KMOP is receiving more reports of domestic violence through its Live Without Bullying platform. What is well-being? The Slovenian child wellbeing index might be a good starting point (presented at the conference in Helsinki).

Croatia: the child compass idea would be very important for Step by Step since they are actively working on child protection and well-being. The importance of a mental health focus was highlighted (especially in relation to teenagers), and work-life balance of the working parents/carers. The impact of digitalization was also highlighted and the need to improve digital skills as well as child safety online.

Belgium: The potential negative effects of digitalization were mentioned, especially in relation to marketing towards children. Gezinsbond is consolidating its “child norm” concept which could be used as a model/starting point for developing the COFACE child compass. Another area which has an impact on the income of families is VAT on child-related products. This could be an area to develop in the child compass as well in relation to the family poverty dimension. The secretariat of COFACE suggested this was an issue not only for children but also for women (eg sanitary products) and could be part of a wider campaign on VAT.

The secretariat will collect all this feedback and see how to develop further the idea of the child compass with the aim to launch it at the Berlin event on the EU child guarantee.

### **3. Discuss the 2021 workplan**

[http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/AC1\\_2020\\_COFACEActivities2021.pdf](http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/AC1_2020_COFACEActivities2021.pdf)

The AC members briefly discussed the 2021 workplan and activities. The aim is to :

- consolidate the Digital Family Lab
- have an event on the impact of economics and investing in families/children, or economics at the service of society
- continue the work on digital families (more relevant than ever)
- work on securing parts of the EU budget to support families

Given the difficult financial context as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, it could be good to work together also on better indicating the social impact measurement of family support programmes run by COFACE members.