

## **Annual report 2025**

Driving change for families:  
Strengthening policy and  
practice across Europe

[coface-eu.org](https://coface-eu.org)



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Date of publication: May 2026

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Editor: Ida Björklund

Graphic design: [JQ&ROS Visual Communications](#)

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# Overview of 2025 results

- ✓ We welcomed **two new COFACE members** from Portugal and Italy, and were approached by 10+ organisations (from Scotland, Netherlands, Bulgaria, France, Albania, Slovakia, Spain) about applying for membership.
- ✓ We consolidated our internal governance through the **adoption of a COFACE child safeguarding policy**, and a broader Common Reference Framework for safe and inclusive activities.
- ✓ **We published an annual report of all of our activities**, which was widely distributed at our events.
- ✓ In 2025, important steps were taken to **consolidate the European Family Lab**, COFACE's innovation incubator.
- ✓ **We published two new e-learning courses under the L.I.N.K. programme**, in partnership with KMOP: one course focused on how to create a short course on social rights (targeting organisations), and one course focused on bullying management (targeting parents and carers).
- ✓ **We published 3 Insights on Family Policies** through the European Observatory on Family Policy, spotlighting local integrated family support models in Italy, Belgium and Germany.
- ✓ **We partnered in two European Horizon Europe research projects** as impact partner - rEUsilience and PATHS2INCLUDE – building bridges between research, policy and practice through different channels including a Policy Lab on families and resilience, and an EU policy round table on inclusive labour markets. We continued to build bridges between research and policy on transnational families through the Trafady COST network.

- ✓ **We accepted 25+ invitations to speak at various events**, in some cases organising workshops as we did for the eTwinning community of teachers on the topic of school bullying.

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- ✓ **With the support of COFACE member AGF**, we brought family policy-makers together in Warsaw to discuss local prevention models to support families, spotlighting good practices in Estonia and Italy.

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- ✓ **We hosted two breakfast byte webinars** spotlighting good practices of COFACE members in North Macedonia (Youth of Diverse Families), Croatia (Parents Association Step by Step) and Greece (KMOP).

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- ✓ **We organised two European expert meetings**. One in Warsaw on work-life balance and parental equality with Share The Care and ZUS, and one in Brussels on integrated family support with the Odisee Centre for Family Studies (Belgium).

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- ✓ **We organised an annual meeting of the COFACE Disability platform** in Paris with Unapei (French member representing persons with intellectual disabilities and their families).

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- ✓ **We organised three study visits of local services in Brussels** (with Gezinsbond), Paris (with Unapei) and Trieste (with CSB onlus, Share The Care and Tulip Foundation).

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- ✓ **We organised 4 working groups on work-life balance**, financial inclusion, safer internet and climate change.

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- ✓ **We organised four capacity-building sessions** focusing on blended families (spotlighting practices in Finland and Belgium), family-friendly workplaces in EU neighbourhood countries (with UNFPA and Share The Care), the changing social media landscape (through the annual COFACE communication webinar), and EU funding for family support (focusing on the ESF+, Erasmus+ and CERV).

# Overview of 2025 results

- ✓ **We hosted two European policy webinars**, one focusing on the implementation of the European Care Strategy and one on the implementation of the European Child Guarantee (spotlighting good practice in integrated family support in Belgium).
- ✓ **We co-organised a PATHS2INCLUDE European policy round table** on inclusive labour markets with the European Economic and Social Committee, in Brussels with a wide range of stakeholders from EU institutions, social partners and civil society.
- ✓ **We published three new COFACE position papers** on preventing family poverty, personal insolvency standards for families, and families and climate change.
- ✓ **We carried out an EU policy review** focusing on the work-life balance of parents with disabilities.
- ✓ **We produced two COFACE European policy briefs**: one on data gaps in EU statistical surveys, and one on the impact of Europe on financial inclusion of families.
- ✓ **We published a set of 15 rEUsilience policy principles for family resilience**, as well as a rEUsilience European roadmap for rights and resilience of families, with practical recommendations for policy, data collection and funding programmes.
- ✓ **We co-developed 9 PATHS2INCLUDE policy briefs on inclusive labour markets**, looking at employment discrimination from different perspectives: care, gender, age, disability.
- ✓ **We participated in 10 + European alliance of NGOs and trade unions**, coordinated the European Care Alliance with 20+ NGOs and trade unions, and chaired the Child Rights Action Group. This led to the publication of 17 joint statements on EU policy and legislation.

- ✓ **We monitored closely EU legislation in areas which impact the social rights of families online** such as the Digital Services Act, the Child Sexual Abuse regulation and the Artificial Intelligence Act. We organised 10 focus groups with COFACE members in 8 countries focusing on safer internet: KFO, Egyszulo, Family Initiative, Isadora Duncan single parents foundation, KMOP, NELFA, Share The Care, UNAF, Tulip Foundation, Vaestoliitto.

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- ✓ **We participated in 30+ consultations to bring the pluralistic voice of families** to the EU and international level. Namely to shape policies on disability rights, gender equality, social rights, poverty, safer internet, cyberbullying, intergenerational fairness and more. This included meetings with various European Commissioners.

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- ✓ **We continued to strengthen strategic partnerships with EU agencies** like EIGE, Eurofound and EASNIE, as well as international organisations like the Council of Europe, OECD, and the UN.

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- ✓ **We published 10 Families Corner Newsletters**, 100+ website articles, reviewed parts of the website to make it more accessible, secured strong engagement on 6 social media platforms (including LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram), celebrated 6 international days (safer internet, women's rights, families, care and support, child rights, disability), and produced 10+ videos on social rights.

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- ✓ **Through our meetings offline and online, we reached out to 40 countries:** Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, US. And more than 140 countries through the COFACE website.

# Highlights of 2025

## JANUARY

- > EU Policy webinar on the European Care Strategy
- > Media statement for Safer Internet Day

## MARCH

- > COFACE working group on safer internet meets in Helsinki
- > COFACE working group on financial inclusion (online)
- > COST TraFaDy meeting: Ethical considerations in researching and working with children in the transnational families context (online)

## MAY

- > COFACE organises final conference of rEUsilience project in Brussels
- > Breakfast byte webinar on single parent families in North Macedonia, with perspectives from Hungary and Spain
- > COFACE Buro meets Commissioner Glenn Micallef in Brussels to discuss cyberbullying measures

- > COFACE working group on work-life balance of parents with disabilities (online)
- > rEUsilience Policy Lab meeting in Brussel

## FEBRUARY

- > Media statement for International Women's Rights Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March, focusing on future Gender Equality Strategy
- > Online capacity building on blended families: spotlight on Finland and Belgium
- > European Care Alliance Statement "The new EU Commission must give space to its ambitions on long-term care"

## APRIL

- > European expert meeting in Warsaw on work-life balance and parental equality
- > COFACE welcomes new member organisations from Portugal and Italy
- > Launch of new L.I.N.K. e-learning course on education for social rights

## JUNE

- > **COFACE working group on families and climate change** (online)

## AUGUST

- > **European expert meeting on integrated family support**, with the European Observatory on Family Policy in Brussels
- > **COFACE participates in youth policy dialogue with Commissioner Micallef**
- > **Online exchange with COFACE members on social media bans**

## OCTOBER

- > **Launch of new L.I.N.K. course** on bullying, to support parents and carers
- > **COFACE Disability platform meets in Paris** to discuss families and deinstitutionalisation
- > **EU peer exchange webinar on the implementation of the European Child Guarantee**
- > **COFACE communication webinar** on the changing social media landscape

## DECEMBER

## JULY

- > **Building a Common Reference Framework for safe and inclusive activities**

## SEPTEMBER

- > **Breakfast byte webinar on family education to prevent child sexual abuse**, with experts from Greece and Croatia
- > **European Care Alliance Statement** on the UN International day of care and support
- > **COFACE European Policy brief on filling data gaps in EU statistics**

## NOVEMBER

- > **Online capacity-building** on EU funding for family support projects
- > **Launch of EU policy review on work-life balance of parents with disabilities**
- > **Study visit to Trieste on fathers' engagement in perinatal care**

# 1 Introduction

## ABOUT US

Founded in 1958 and with 50+ member organisations in 26 European countries, COFACE Families Europe is a network which represents millions of families, volunteers, and professionals. Our areas of work include social and family policy, education, disability rights, gender equality, child rights, migration, consumer issues as well as the impact of technological developments on families. COFACE Families Europe advocates for policies of non-discrimination and equal opportunities between persons and between family forms and specifically supports policies aimed at increasing equality between women and men, with a special focus on reconciliation between work, care and family life.

**COFACE Families Europe aims to achieve several positive overarching outcomes for families and society.**

- + **Work Life balance and family-friendly workplaces**
- + **Gender equal and caring economy**
- + **Inclusive education and societies**
- + **Social inclusion and poverty prevention**
- + **Financial inclusion and an economy that serves society and the planet**
- + **Independent living for all, family carers and persons with disabilities**
- + **Child rights and family well-being**
- + **Digital citizenship and harnessing the potential of technology**

**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.

**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, be fully included in the community, and enjoy their family life in dignity and harmony.

**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 views the family as a multi-faceted, dynamic and intergenerational entity coming in different shapes and sizes. We advocate for a systemic two-generation approach in policy-making to support families and children in different life transitions from birth to old age.

## KEY ACTIVITIES



### Represent

Representing COFACE member organisations towards the European and international institutions (UN, OECD, Council of Europe), and towards other organisations operating at European level (EU agencies and stakeholder groups, NGO alliances, forums, platforms).



### Advocate

Carrying out advocacy campaigns for families and family organisations wherever the interests of families and their members are at stake.



### Coordinate

Coordinating and facilitating projects, programmes, activities and initiatives of member organisations, bringing a European dimension to their local initiatives to drive change for families.



### Monitor

Closely following EU and international initiatives, assessing the negative and positive impacts for families. Assess emerging family trends across Europe through studies in various fields, and making the link with EU/international initiatives.



### Network

Establishing networking systems for the continuing exchange of information and actions with member organisations on matters arising within the European Union, as well as reaching out to individuals who support COFACE's mission.



### Initiate

Developing new research, projects, conferences, seminars, trainings and study days, and putting in motion programmes of action at European level, in partnership with other organisations.



### Educate

Creating a wide range of tools to support life-long learning of families and professionals.



### Research

Collecting data through different channels to better understand policies and practices to support families of today.

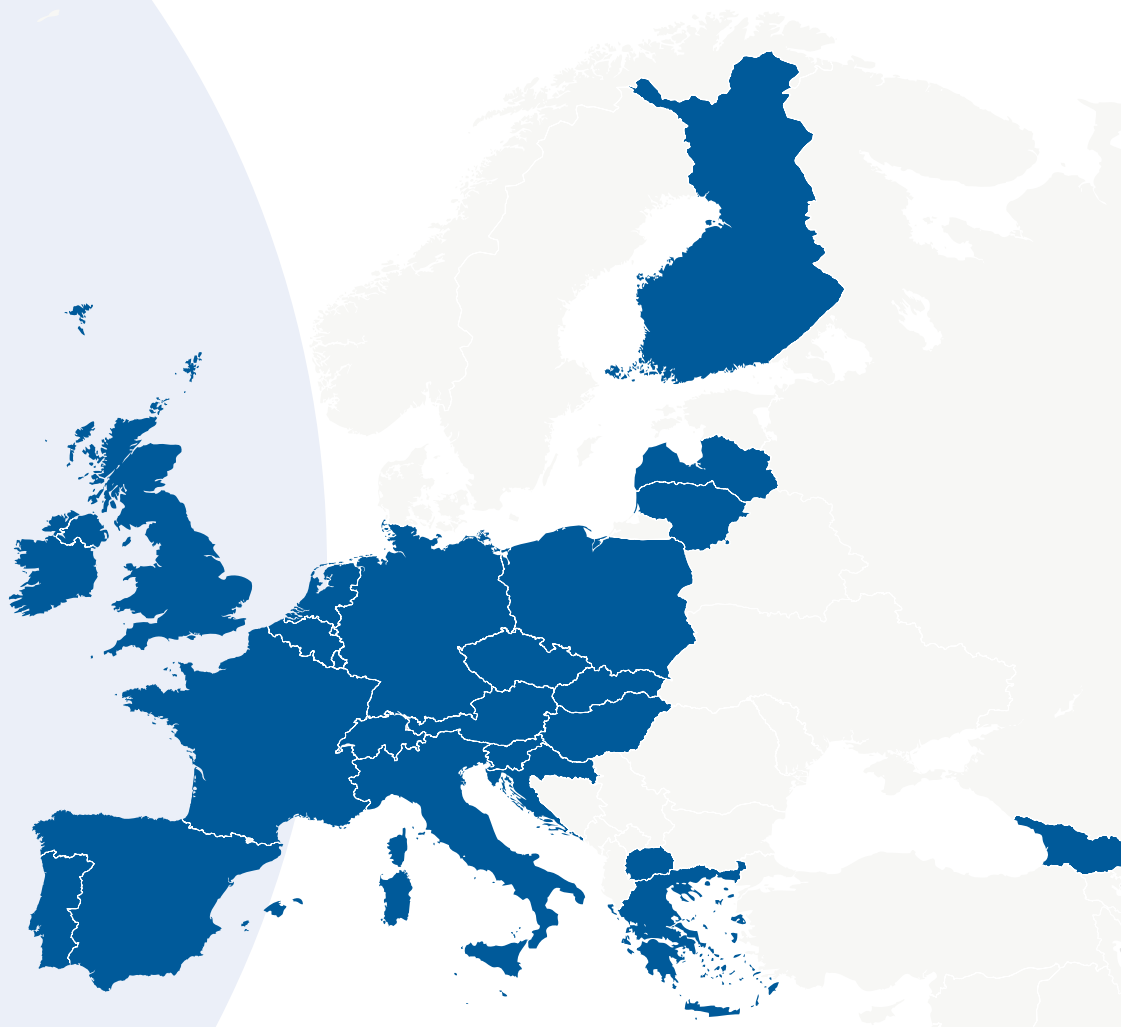
## 2025 IN NUMBERS



## MEMBERS

### Countries in 2025:

Austria  
Belgium  
Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Czech Republic  
Finland  
France  
Georgia  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Ireland  
Italy  
Latvia  
Lithuania  
Luxembourg  
Malta  
The Netherlands  
North Macedonia  
Poland  
Portugal  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Spain  
Switzerland  
United Kingdom



The membership spreads across 26 European countries. 2 new member organisations joined the network in 2025: Mulheres a Obra from Portugal and CSB onlus from Italy.

COFACE has been approached by 10+ new family organisations (from Scotland, Netherlands, Bulgaria, France, Albania, Slovakia, Spain) about applying for membership.

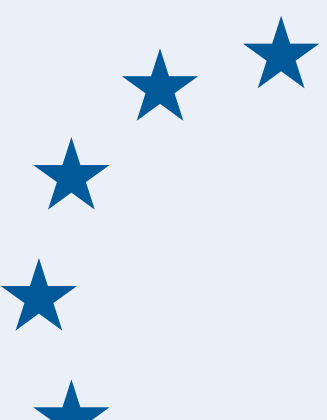
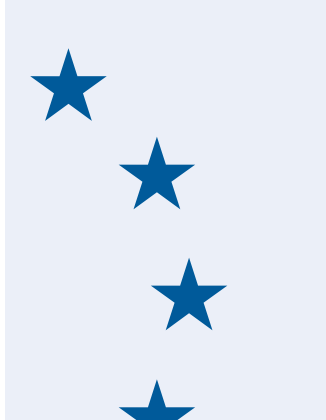


We consolidated our internal governance through the adoption of a COFACE Child Safeguarding policy, and a broader Common Reference Framework for Safe and Inclusive activities.

## PARTNERS

An important role of COFACE Families Europe is to function as a bridge between civil society organisations, research bodies and public authorities. We build on the experience of our member organisations and we listen to the needs of families at grassroots level and channel these to policy and decision makers at EU level, daily ensuring links between EU and local realities. In addition to consulting our member organisations, we regularly build new EU projects and participate in many Horizon Europe projects as advisory board member. We link up to other networks to exchange best practices, learn about other ways of solving societal problems, and grow our network, on which we can rely on for our events, projects and advocacy work.

We are actively engaged in a number of official European Commission stakeholder groups, to which we bring our knowledge about the needs of families across Europe. This is also the case with key Members of the European Parliament. Finally, we also work closely with EU agencies and international bodies.

European Parliament	EU advisory groups	EU agencies	International agencies
<p>Disability Rights Inter-group</p> <p>Child Rights Intergroup</p> <p>European Parliament's Champions for informal carers</p> <p>Committees FEMM, EMPL, LIBE, CULT, IMCO</p> 	<p>Disability Platform (JUST)</p> <p>Better Internet for Kids advisory board (CNECT)</p> 	<p>European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EUROFOUND)</p> <p>European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE)</p> <p>European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)</p> <p>Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)</p> <p>European Banking Authority (EBA)</p> <p>European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA)</p> <p>European Labour Authority (ELA)</p>	<p>United Nations (special consultative status at the ECOSOC)</p> <p>Council of Europe</p> <p>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)</p> <p>United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)</p> <p>The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)</p> <p>UN Women</p>

### EU civil society networks

European Care Alliance ▪ eTwinning ▪ EESC – Civil Society Liaison Group ▪ EU Alliance for Investing in children ▪ European Disability Forum ▪ European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community-based settings ▪ European Platform on Asylum and Migration ▪ Finance Watch ▪ Right to Energy Coalition ▪ Population Europe ▪ Social Platform ▪ Sustainable Development Goals Watch Europe ▪ European Child Sexual Abuse Legislation Advocacy Group (ECLAG) ▪ Child Rights Action Group ▪ European Anti-Poverty Coalition ▪ Mental Health Policy Hub ▪ Coalition for Children's Rights Online ▪ Social Policy Officers' Group (SPOG) ▪

## 2 CORE ACTIVITIES under the ESF+ EaSI PROGRAMME

Under COFACE's operating grant, the network implemented a mix of activities including mutual learning and transnational exchanges, capacity building and trainings, driving innovation through the European Family Lab, communication and dissemination activities, and EU policy and advocacy initiatives.

### MUTUAL LEARNING AND TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGES

**We organised two European expert meetings in Warsaw and Brussels.**



#### European expert meeting on work-life balance

21/05/2025

Warsaw (Poland)

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How to effectively support parents in balancing family and work life? This was the key question during the **European expert meeting in Warsaw on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2025**, under the patronage of the Polish presidency of the EU and co-hosted with Share The Care Foundation Poland and ZUS (Social Insurance Institution). With 120+ participants from 27 countries we had rich discussions focusing on parental equality, discussing public policy solutions as well as good practices in the workplace. Experts from family organisations and public policy-makers across Europe joined us in Warsaw, as well as employers, trade unions, health practitioners, representatives from key partners such as the OECD, EPSU, the UNFPA and the European Equality Law Network, and researchers from a wide range of universities in Poland and across Europe. The conference covered multiple topics including men and care, the partnership model of care and its impact on fertility, the return of mothers to the labour market after birth of a child, and using an inclusive approach in campaigns on parental equality which takes into account the diversity of families in European societies today. The key findings of the conference are available in a meeting report, a livestream recording, and the conference video in English and Polish. We made the most of the conference to organise two policy side meetings: one with representatives of ministries of social affairs, focusing on local family support models in Estonia and Italy, in the framework of the European Child Guarantee; and one co-hosted with the UNFPA EECA on family-supportive workplaces in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.



### **Breaking Silos, Building Futures: Policy Innovations for Integrated Family and Child Support**

25/09/2025

Brussels (Belgium)

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Building on the different Observatory outputs over the last 4 years (including the new 2025 Insights in Family Policy series which spotlighted developments in Belgium, Germany and Italy), we co-hosted a conference with the Odisee Centre for Family Studies in Brussels, convening 100+ researchers, policymakers, public administrators, and NGOs to advance integrated, place-based strategies that strengthen family resilience and equity through systemic service coordination. Centering on policy levers that empower municipalities and amplify early investments, the event explored how cross-sector collaboration enhances service quality and maximises long-term societal returns. The programme featured a keynote roundtable followed by four interactive streams, each structured as workshops to foster debate and cross-fertilisation of ideas. Stream 1 reimagined ECEC centres as community anchors, coordinating education, health, and social support. Stream 2 examined integrated service hubs to streamline access for families. Stream 3 tackled governance innovations to break silos in local prevention efforts, while Stream 4 harnessed digital tools to bridge service gaps. The meeting report of the conference is available on the COFACE website and is serving to further understand the dynamics of integrated family support at local level.

## **We organised an annual meeting of the COFACE Disability platform in Paris with Unapei.**



This year's annual COFACE Disability platform meeting aimed to bring together COFACE members and external

partners to share diverse insights and experiences related to the inclusive transition of care services for persons with

disabilities. It was hosted by Unapei in Paris, France. Using the COFACE Disability S.H.I.F.T guide as a starting point, the discussion focused on what this inclusive transition concretely entails on the ground in different countries, what are the challenges and opportunities in facilitating it, the presentation of local best practices, as well as insights into the best way to integrate families in its realisation.

There were 30+ delegates from 13 countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Spain. Some of the ideas emerging from the discussions included the following: we need to continue mainstreaming the UNCRPD in European and national laws, making this a key objective in all COFACE activities; we need to continue

fighting for inclusive education across Europe, for the rights of children and to build truly inclusive societies; we need to strengthen the family dimension of the European Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities; we need to focus on human rights and the recognition of family carers of children and persons with disabilities, as allies in implementing the UNCRPD and building an inclusive life; our S.H.I.F.T. guide stays our key vision for rethinking disability policies, more than ever; there are so many great practices out there, including the community building and empowerment in Apei de la Boucle de la Seine in Paris (which hosted a high quality study visit for COFACE Disability delegates).

## **We organised 3 online working groups on work-life balance, financial inclusion, and climate change.**

With 25+ participants from 10 countries, we held an online working group in January 2025 aiming to bring together COFACE members working on **work-life balance matters and disability rights**, to kick-start a discussion on the work-life balance of parents and carers with disabilities. With key external experts from the European Disability Forum and the European Equality Law Network which monitors transposition of the EU work-life balance directive, we discussed EU legislation and collected information on challenges and good practices, namely measures to support the work-life balance of workers with disabilities, examining especially parental leave measures for workers with disabilities; and finally reflecting on existing definitions of work-life balance. This led to a key output, namely an EU policy review focusing on the work-life balance of parents with disabilities.

With 22 participants from 7 countries, a number of topics were discussed during the **financial inclusion working**

**group** in April 2025, including EU developments like the upcoming EU financial literacy strategy and various legal developments; priorities of COFACE members to boost financial inclusion, different financial education tools they use including media campaigns, handbooks, webinars and more; as well as advocating for indexation of child benefits, affordable energy and more. Key partners like Finance Watch and BEUC were also invited to provide their expertise in fields such as cash access, the digital euro, and payment fraud. This led to two outputs: the first output is a COFACE position paper on personal insolvency, focusing on the harmonisation of law on personal insolvency across the EU in order to support over-indebted families in Europe. The second output is a COFACE European Policy brief focusing on financial inclusion trends and challenges, aimed to build capacity of COFACE members to fully understand broader EU finance trends and how they impact families both negatively and positively.

With 10+ participants, a working group consisting of COFACE secretariat and COFACE members met in July 2025 to discuss the potential impacts on families of both **climate change** and the measures to mitigate the impact

of climate change. The working group especially aimed to develop a COFACE position paper on families and climate change, which was adopted later in the year (see below under EU Policy and Advocacy).

## **We hosted two European policy webinars, one focusing on the implementation of the European Care Strategy and one on the implementation of the European Child Guarantee (spotlighting good practice in integrated family support).**



EUROPEAN CARE STRATEGY:  
FOR CARERS AND  
CARE RECEIVERS

7 September 2022  
#EUcarestrategy

**EU Policy Webinar on the implementation of the European Care Strategy**

4/2/2025

Brussels (Belgium)

We organised an EU policy webinar focused on both dimensions of the European Care Strategy (ECEC and LTC), taking stock of key developments at EU and national level with the help of various experts. The 125 participants from 32 countries included representatives of UNICEF, EIGE, Commission, governments, family carers, NGOs, local authorities, and research institutions. Key challenges were identified through intense debates and discussions such as the need to include monitoring of reforms at regional/local level (huge variation); the lack of capacity of local authorities to launch ECEC/LTC reforms, and the need to support this further e.g. through peer reviews or exchanges through the European Care Strategy framework; planning and data were also highlighted, namely the huge potential of administrative data; monitoring of quality of ECEC is essential, not only ECEC supply; concrete examples of ESF+ and RFF were referred to for boosting care reforms strategically.

For Universal Children's Day 2025, we put the spotlight on the European Child Guarantee and its potential to drive positive change for children and their families. This was done through an online European peer exchange taking the Belgian family centre model (referred to as the House of the Child), as a starting point for transnational exchanges and mutual learning with other countries in the EU and neighbourhood countries. This was a public webinar open to policymakers and practitioners set in the context of the implementation of the European Child Guarantee. For this a factsheet and chronology were developed prior to the peer exchange. With 130 people from 20 countries, we discussed key dimensions of family support services, namely the fact that these services are one part of the bigger set of measures that families in Europe need today, highlighting the 15 reUsilience policy principles as an overarching framework.



### **European peer exchange: The House of the Child in Belgium**

19/11/2025

Brussels (Belgium)

## We organised three study visits of local services in Brussels (with Gezinsbond and the House of the Child), Paris (with Unapei) and Trieste (with CSB onlus).



**Apei de la Boucle de la Seine, Paris.** The COFACE Disability platform visited the local services of Unapei in the Paris region. The visit was conducted at services belonging to the association *Apei de la boucle de la Seine* (local branch of Unapei) and consisted of three distinct elements. First, a visit at a supported employment service *Les Cerisiers* which provides meaningful employment opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities. A second visit took place at the *Jean Jaurès residence*, where people with disabilities live together in a collective setting and apartments, and finally the visit ended at the community restaurant *La Croisée des Chemins* which is run with employees with different disabilities.



**House of the Child, Elmer Noord, Brussels.** Delegates at the Observatory conference on policy innovations for integrated family support stayed on the next day (26<sup>th</sup> September) to see an example of integrated family support in Brussels. This was an early childhood education and care neighbourhood service (called Elmer) which organises social day-care (for children aged 3 months to 3,5 years) and has 4 branches in the most underprivileged areas of the Brussels Region. Elmer aims to reach a socio-cultural mix of families living in the neighbourhood and focuses especially on vulnerable families. In total Elmer has a capacity for 190 children.



**Centro per la salute dei bambini (CSB onlus), Trieste.** This visit focused on fathers' engagement in perinatal care, bringing together COFACE staff and members from Italy, Poland and Bulgaria to study integrated family support models, and cooperation between social and health care sectors. It included two components: a morning of site visits to different services (hospital neonatal care units and the *Villaggio per Crescere* run by CSB onlus) and an afternoon gathering all participants for a general debrief and discussion on good practice in engaging fathers in their care role around the birth of a child.

## CAPACITY BUILDINGS AND TRAININGS

### MARCH 2025

**In March 2025, an online workshop was organised for COFACE members to take stock of challenges for blended families.** Blended families, also known as stepfamilies or recomposed families, are increasingly common across Europe due to rising rates of divorce, remarriage, and cohabitation. These families typically consist of a couple and their children from previous relationships, who form a new family unit. Blended families in Europe reflect broader societal changes. While challenges persist, increasing legal recognition and societal support are helping normalise and strengthen these family structures. There were 30+ participants from 11 countries during the exchange: Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Spain. The workshop explored emotional, financial, and legal challenges these families face, particularly focusing on the situation in Belgium and Finland.

### MAY 2025

**In May 2025 in Warsaw, we held a joint capacity-building workshop with Share The Care and UNFPA in order to discuss good practices in working with employers on building gender-equal and family-supportive workplaces.**

This was an informal peer exchange in Warsaw which spotlighted the situation in Poland, and enabled exchanges with the countries of the Expanding Choices project (Albania, BiH, Kosovo, Moldova, North Macedonia and Serbia), aiming to create synergies, transfer good practice and create new partnerships.

## NOVEMBER 2025

**In November 2025, we organised a communication webinar focusing on the changing social media landscape, namely looking at the impact on the capacity and campaigning of social rights organisations.** The aim was to collect feedback on how civil society is using social media for communication and dissemination on social rights, their challenges and successes, and how they are managing the constantly evolving social media landscape. The webinar was attended by 25+ participants from 9 countries (Spain, Greece, Poland, Lithuania, Belgium, Hungary, Portugal, France and Bulgaria), as well as keynotes from DG EMPL, Eurofound and the European Disability Forum, and the communications departments of key European partners were also present such as the EESC, the European Parliament, and key European civil society organisations. We discussed the 1. impact of the evolving social media landscape on national civil society 2. how social media platforms ensure continued visibility of social rights causes and social Europe, and 3. building partnerships for better social rights coverage and mutual support. Institutional and non-institutional partners communicating about social rights identified similar **challenges** (technical challenges linked to the set-up of social media platforms, keeping up with the pace of innovation and diversified audiences requires new skills, communication on social/human rights is complex, the reduced capacity of NGOs, new EU regulations are impacting communication on social rights) and **opportunities** (reaching out to new audiences in different ways, making civil society stronger and how technological innovation can support civil society), and finally highlighted some of their adaptation strategies. The findings can be found in the meeting report of the webinar.

## DECEMBER 2025

**In December 2025, we organised an online workshop on EU funding for family support.** This workshop aimed to build capacity of the COFACE community to apply for EU funding to boost their work on family support in their communities. It was designed for national civil society organisations supporting children and families. Family support is an important element of many EU policies, including the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Child Guarantee, the European Care Strategy, as well as the transposition of laws like the European Work-life balance directive. The trainer started with a general introduction to EU funding, and then focused on three specific funds: the Erasmus+ programme, the CERV programme (Citizen, Equality, Rights and Values) and the European Social Fund +. Following the workshop, the Members area of the website was updated with new information and actionable tips, as well as a MatchMaker document to connect members on European project building.

## INNOVATION INCUBATOR: EUROPEAN FAMILY LAB

The European Family Lab, which we have been busy running since 2020, serves as an innovation incubator for ideas and cross-country knowledge transfer to help family professionals deliver the best possible supports for families and children. Major steps were taken in 2025 to further develop the Family Lab in cooperation with members and partners.



### L.I.N.K.

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

(LEARNING AND INNOVATING  
THROUGH NEW KNOWLEDGE)

**L.I.N.K: An education and training programme for lifelong learning on social rights from a whole-family perspective.**

Two e-learning courses were launched in 2025: one targeting professionals, and one targeting families. This was part of the education branch of the European Family Lab, namely referred to as the L.I.N.K. programme. Launched in May 2025, the new e-learning course (“How to Design, Develop, Deliver your short course”) was developed to address the diverse educational needs of family organisations and provide them with the necessary tools and knowledge to create high-quality short courses in the social rights field. Education is a powerful tool to drive social change and implementation of social measures. The course structure ensures that family professionals gain both theoretical and practical understanding, preparing them to implement the concepts in a real-world scenario. The main learning outcomes include understanding the key steps needed to build a short course for learners in local communities; how to identify and specify the target audience and relevant topics for a course; setting clear and achievable learning goals, objectives and outcomes for a course. 50+ professionals have signed up since its launch.



### The 3Ds Course

How to  
Design & Develop & Deliver  
your short course

A second L.I.N.K. e-learning course was also launched in the second half of 2025, this time targeting families directly with expertise on how to deal with bullying of their children (both as victim and perpetrator). The course has 70+ registered parents/carers, and is available in English and Greek. We brought this information directly to Commissioner Micallef through a strategic meeting in preparation of the upcoming EU Cyberbullying action plan. We continued to build partnerships with key European education organisations such as European Schoolnet, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), and the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB).



## EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY ON FAMILY POLICY

### European Observatory on Family Policy.



*Insights on Family Policies* is a series published by the European Observatory on Family Policy, a joint initiative by COFACE Families Europe and the Odisee Centre for Family Studies, presenting evidence in dossiers on integrated approaches to family support. The series puts the spotlight on three countries and trends in integrated family support: Italy's integrated early childhood system, Flanders' Houses of the Child (Huizen van het Kind), and Germany's Preventive Social Policies. The results of the Insights were used to provide input into the first expert meeting of the European Observatory on Family Policy, which examined these models in practice, as well as by spotlighting the House of the Child in a European peer exchange webinar (supported by an additional factsheet and chronology of the practice).

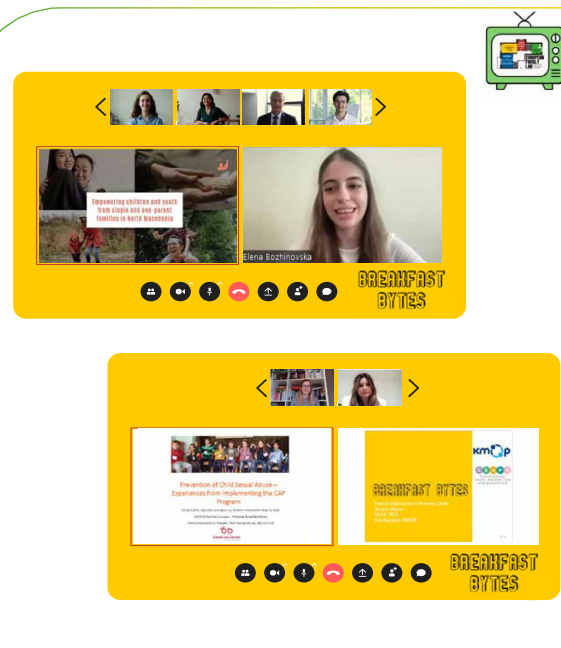
**COFACE  
TV**

**BREAKFAST  
BYTES**

**COFACE TV channel collecting videos on policy & practice Breakfast byte webinars on family support.**

The European Family Lab community is growing as indicated by the wide range of participants - old and new- (civil society organisations, families, ministries and researchers) who attend COFACE webinars. COFACE supported community-building and dissemination through two breakfast byte webinars with an average of 40-50 participants per webinar. The first focused on single parent families in North Macedonia and recent reforms to support them; and the second focused on family education for prevention of child sexual abuse in Croatia and Greece with key tips for parents and carers on how to address this.

A room of the Lab is dedicated to COFACE TV, a YouTube channel collecting different types of videos on family policy and practice, functioning as a resource to find expertise, people and organisations to connect with. The new videos available in COFACE TV are especially recordings of the breakfast byte webinar expert talks on single parent families in North Macedonia, and on family education for prevention of child sexual abuse in Greece and Croatia.



**FAMILIES2030**

**Families2030 peer exchange group.**

Coordinated by COFACE, this group of policy-makers from 20+ ministries of social affairs aims to reinforce cross-country cooperation. We held a meeting of this group in Warsaw in the form of a study session on local integrated family support models, linked to the implementation of the European Child Guarantee. During this study session, participants focused on the Peripesa model in Estonia, and the impact of ECEC reforms in Italy on integrating services to support families. This group of national family policy-makers have met four times now: in Berlin in 2022, in Madrid in 2023, in Vilnius in 2024, in Warsaw in 2025, and COFACE plans to bring them together again Valletta in 2026.

## COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

**We published 10 Families Corner Newsletters, 100+ website articles, reviewed parts of the COFACE website to make it more accessible, secured strong engagement on 6 social media platforms (including LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram), and celebrated 5 international days (women’s rights, families, care and support, child rights, disability), and 10+ videos on social rights.**

COFACE ensured an ongoing society watchdog function to raise awareness about new trends and emerging challenges for families at EU and national level, aiming to foster transfer of knowledge across countries, sections and levels.

COFACE does so in order to develop and disseminate innovative policy and practices as well as give a voice to challenges and needs of all types of families in the EU and inspire one another to tackle current and future issues.

This involves building various online information and advocacy campaigns to disseminate COFACE/EU activities strategically to local communities in Europe and beyond and at the same time spread grassroots information to the EU level.

In 2025, we continued to bring together our network to strategically discuss the COFACE Communication strategy, and new developments in the communication field with a focus the changing social media landscape.

The following main communication channels helped to achieve our dissemination objectives.

**The state-of-the art multi-lingual website** stays a central European hub on family matters, with 100+ news articles, 33.000+ page views in 2025 with 140 countries reached through the website.

Equally the **Families Corner newsletter** gathers all relevant aspects about COFACE, its members, the EU and beyond which are sent out monthly to 4000+ people.

**Social media** is an integral part of our dissemination strategy. Multilevel interactions with the 11.000+ followers on our social media communities which are growing steadily through our activities on LinkedIn, Facebook, Bluesky, X, Youtube and Instagram. We are building various communities of EU and family professionals from different backgrounds, individuals interested in family matters and partnerships across sectors, countries, languages and political beliefs.


 @COFACEEU.BSKY.SOCIAL

 @COFACE\_EU

 @COFACE.EU

 @familieseurope

 Families Europe

 COFACE Families Europe

In 2025, COFACE published 10 Families Corner newsletters and connected you all by sharing key information and news affecting families across Europe and beyond through four sections:

- ▶ **You&The EU:** European initiatives which affect our daily lives directly or indirectly.
- ▶ **Creative Hub:** Highlights about the great work of the COFACE members and partners to support the rights of families.
- ▶ **Discuss&Debate:** Opinion pieces from inside and outside COFACE to show the pluralism of views in our inclusive and democratic European societies.
- ▶ **Timeout:** A section with elements which will make you laugh, reflect or relax. Fun and smiles are an integral part of the Families Corner experience.

We issued **7 calls to action and media statements** on International Women's Rights Day, International Day of Families, International Day of Care and Support, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and also on new LINK courses, and the launch of the Insights of Family Policy series.

Finally, we also consolidated our **video strategy** in 2025, by creating a video series focusing on different aspects of COFACE activities: monitoring Social Europe initiatives, making policy recommendations to support families, and promoting different tools developed such as the L.I.N.K. courses to help tackle and prevent bullying.

### COFACE video explainers - Did you know? ▶ Play all



This is a series of short video explainers on the work that COFACE Families Europe is doing. Learn more about what we are working on for a better every-day life for you. Find out more here about...

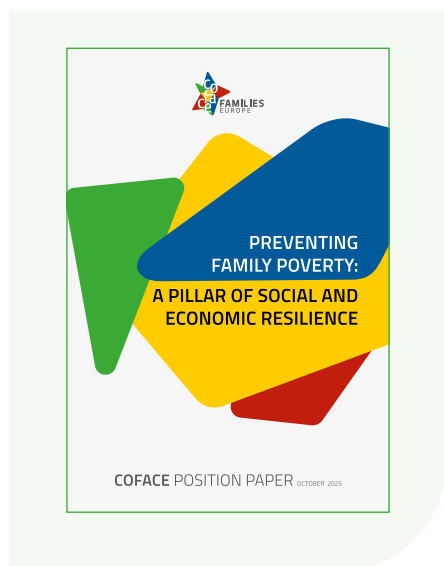
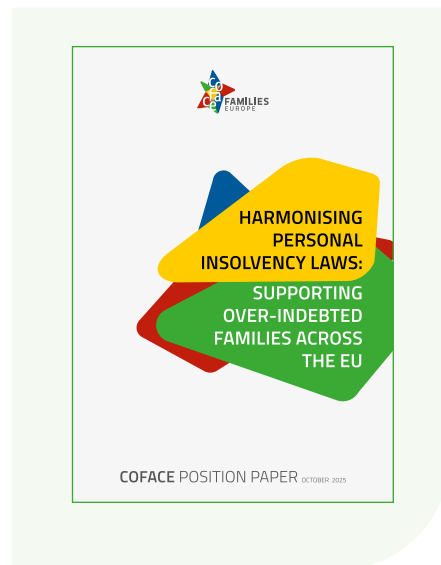


## EU POLICY AND ADVOCACY

We published three new position papers on family poverty, personal insolvency standards for families, and families and climate change.

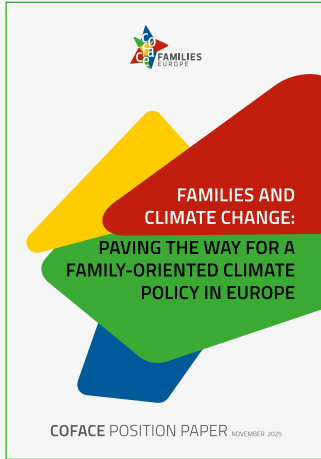
### Harmonising personal insolvency laws: Supporting over-indebted families across the EU

COFACE Families Europe recognises the profound impact that personal insolvency laws have on families, particularly those in vulnerable situations, including families with children, families with disabilities, and low-income households. While business insolvency has been partially harmonised at the EU level, personal insolvency remains fragmented across member states. This fragmentation leads to inconsistent outcomes, exacerbating the financial difficulties of over-indebted families and undermining social cohesion. In the context of ongoing discussions at the EU level regarding financial legislation and social policy, COFACE Families Europe positioned itself on personal insolvency to advocate for policies that protect families.



### Preventing family poverty: A pillar of social and economic resilience

This COFACE position paper outlines a comprehensive, family-centred framework for preventing poverty and mitigating social exclusion, structured around a three-tiered approach – primary (universal), secondary (targeted), and tertiary (crisis) prevention – and supported by four essential pillars: Adequate Resources (R), Accessible Services (S), Time sovereignty (T), and Integrated Governance (G). The paper argues that, to address the multidimensional nature of poverty, effective prevention strategies should operate to dismantle policy silos and foster multisectoral coordination.



## Families and Climate Change: Paving the way for a family-oriented climate policy

Climate change is a defining challenge of our time, with urgent ecological, economic, and social implications. Families are at the heart of sustainable development and climate action. They raise the next generation, provide care across life stages, and are crucial for a sustainable change. However, families are impacted by both the effects of climate change and the measures taken to mitigate and adapt to it. This position paper outlines intersections of climate and family policy and provides recommendations to ensure that climate action is inclusive, fair, and futureproof. With this paper COFACE Families Europe calls for an integrated, rights-based, and socially-just approach to climate policy that includes social-ethical considerations and puts the family perspective at all levels first.

**We produced two COFACE European Policy briefs: one on data gaps in EU statistical surveys, and one on the impact of Europe on financial inclusion of families.**

### Making families visible: Closing EU data gaps for better policies

This policy brief explores the role cross-country comparative data plays across Europe in achieving positive outcomes for families and society. It considers the state of play of data on family diversity and household data, care for adult family members, labour market discriminations, and family leaves as examples of where data is key, yet data gaps persist and must be addressed. It identifies the implications these gaps can have for families in Europe, before putting forward potential solutions. The aim of this policy brief is to stress how crucial data is in the policy cycle, share key databases and surveys related to families and family life across the EU, and present recommendations for richer data going forward.



## The impact of Europe on financial inclusion of families: achievements, challenges and future directions

Financial inclusion means universal access to basic, affordable financial services under fair conditions. It is crucial for families' economic security and social integration. This policy brief on financial inclusion provides an overview of EU-level initiatives, legislation, and strategies advancing financial inclusion (from financial literacy to credit regulation) and how they relate to families' needs. It also highlights different EU initiatives and policies, providing updates on recent developments; and ends with reflections on future and upcoming developments which will affect families.



## We carried out an EU policy review focusing on the work-life balance of parents with disabilities.



### The work-life balance of parents with disabilities: An EU policy review

Parents with disabilities exercise rights arising from both aspects of their identity as parents and as persons with disabilities in different areas of life. As employees, they are entitled to all the rights guaranteed to parents, as well as to all the rights arising from their status as person with disabilities. But what happens when those two dimensions intersect to create unique challenges? The COFACE Disability Platform for the rights of persons with disabilities and their families has carried out a review of EU policies in the fields of employment and work-life balance, to assess whether they provide for targeted measures in support to working parents with disabilities. This review represents an initial step in a reflective process aimed at enhancing the principle of equal opportunity and the protection against discrimination for parents with disabilities. The aim of this review was to study the intersection between disability rights and work-life balance policies at EU level, in order to shed light on the specific realities and needs of working parents with disabilities, highlight gaps in recognition of this specific group, spotlight existing measures to support their work-life balance, and make recommendations for future targeted and universal strategies to address their compounding vulnerabilities.

**We participated in 10 + European alliance of NGOs and trade unions, coordinated the European Care Alliance with 20+ NGOs and trade unions, and chaired the Child Rights Action Group. This led to the publication of 17 joint statements on EU policy and legislation.**

### Spotlight on the European Care Alliance

The European Care Alliance is a group of 20+ European civil society organisations, trade unions and social economy organisations representing and supporting persons with disabilities, persons in need of care and their families, as well as service providers in the long-term care and health sectors. It was set up in January 2024 to support implementation of the European Care Strategy, and is coordinated by COFACE Families Europe.



In 2025, the alliance adopted two joint statements:

- ▶ One in March 2025 calling for a European Long-Term Care Platform to support implementation of the European Care Strategy. This was directed at the newly elected College of European Commissioners to ensure they pave the way for actions including assessment of the national reports on long-term care submitted in 2024, supporting care service providers and family carers.
- ▶ One in October 2025 calling for decisive investments in care services, urging the European institutions to earmark dedicated funding for care services under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028–2034. Following the European Commission's proposal for a new long-term EU budget in July 2025, the Alliance warned that the current approach risks sidelining the ambitions of the European Care Strategy and weakening the link between the EU budget and communities on the ground.

# 3 European projects

## CHILD PROTECTION AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE – THE FAMILY PERSPECTIVE

Our work on child protection online focused on two main objectives.

**We engaged in advocacy, dialogue with technology companies, and partnerships with European and international civil society organisations to promote strong policies and funding for child safety online in Europe.** We did this by focusing our efforts on increasing awareness of EU policy makers about the importance of strong regulation for child safety online, with a view to securing political agreements and new legislation. We responded to EU public consultations as an important way to bring the views of COFACE families directly to EU discussions with strong policy recommendations. We led the way for child rights advocacy through co-chairing the Child Rights Action Group (CRAG), a well-established and recognised alliance of child rights NGOs which helped to re-establish the Child Rights Intergroup in the European Parliament, in order to mainstream child rights in all EU policies. We sustained dialogue with tech companies in order to bring the COFACE families perspective to discussions on tech product development, ensuring that child safety by design is core to their work. We focused on giving a stronger voice of European families for shaping EU policy and rules, namely we partnered with European Schoolnet to support the evaluation of the Better Internet for Kids+ Strategy (BIK+), by organising focus groups of parents and caregivers on safer internet in February-March 2025: 10 focus groups were organised in 8 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Spain).

**We focused on strengthening COFACE's infrastructure and approach for engaging family organisations and safer internet centres to increase knowledge of online child safety and collaborate towards stronger child rights online, parenting support, and advocacy to prevent and respond to online child sexual abuse.** We focused on fostering partnerships between local family organisations and safer internet centres through the annual safer internet working group of COFACE. After meeting in Zagreb in 2024 with a European study seminar specifically focusing on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) online and offline, the group met again in Helsinki in 2025 focusing on discussions about the intersections between family, education, and digital policy. 20 participants from 8 countries participated. We had discussions and exchanges on diverse topics affecting families in the digital world including parental control tools and preventing CSA, sharenting, bans of smartphones in schools, and age-verification online. Based on these discussions we started building a COFACE position paper on digital wellbeing in response to the increasing discussions on banning social media and smartphones, which are directly affecting children and youth.



## TRAFADY – TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY DYNAMICS IN EUROPE

In 2025, we continued to engage with the Trafady network of researchers focusing on consolidating our understanding of transnational family dynamics and building bridges between research and policy. This included participation in synergy meetings to lay the groundwork for future guidelines/booklet on ethical considerations when researching and working with children in transnational families, while also linking research insights to policy-relevant recommendations at EU level in the social and migration policy fields. The network drafted and

coordinated several policy briefs on key emerging trends, including family reunification in the EU, good governance practices and 24-hour live-in care workers in transnational family contexts, and initiated a policy paper on remittances, all of which are planned for publication in 2026. In parallel, the network advanced preparations for a policy-oriented general meeting on effective policies supporting transnational families, scheduled for March 2026 in Budapest, aimed at fostering further dialogue between researchers and policymakers.

## REUSILIENCE – BOOSTING RIGHTS AND RESILIENCE OF FAMILIES



In 2025, we continued to run the rEUsilience Policy Lab with a wide range of national and EU stakeholders, in order to test and take forward the policy implications of the research, in order to create solid and grounded

policy solutions for family rights and resilience. The work was organised around two panels of stakeholders - an EU policy panel and a families' panel. A set of 15 policy principles was formulated in response to areas of three policy problems: inadequate financial support for families, a lack of support during family-based transitions, and insufficient service support for families. Finally, we produced a rEUsilience European roadmap for rights and resilience of families, with practical recommendations for policy, data collection and funding programmes at EU level. The roadmap considered competence in the relevant EU policy areas, EU funding pathways for investing in families, adequate monitoring frameworks, and a sound

evidence base for policy reform (through filling existing data gaps). Those engaged in the Policy Lab stakeholder panels formed an important base to communicate back and implement rEUsilience findings, boosting the real-life applicability of the research. This was complemented through communication and dissemination channels set up by COFACE: social media communities, and multi-lingual website, regular newsletters, a series of videos, and a final stakeholder conference in Brussels in June 2025 to wrap-up the rEUsilience project (including a conference highlights video with key policy messages for family resilience).



## PATHS2INCLUDE – FOSTERING INCLUSIVE LABOUR MARKETS



### PATHS2INCLUDE

PATHS2INCLUDE researchers published a series of working papers on different aspects of labour market discriminations. The results of the research were built

into 8 PATHS2INCLUDE policy briefs on inclusive labour markets, looking at employment discrimination from different perspectives: care, gender, age, disability. COFACE especially used the input to feed into EU consultations and meetings relating to the European Pillar of Social Rights action plan, the future EU gender equality strategy, as well as discussions on the upcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy.

On 4 September 2025, PATHS2INCLUDE's policy round table on the role of EU policy in shaping inclusive labour markets took place in Brussels, Belgium. The event was organised in cooperation with the Civil Society

Organisations' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The round table brought together 29 participants consisting of EESC members, representatives from social partners, European civil society organisations working on age, health, poverty and equality, different departments of the European Commission as well as UN representatives. The diversity of the group enabled a constructive exchange of perspectives and ideas.



# 4 Behind the scenes

## WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK...

ALL our members for their enthusiasm and active involvement offline and online.

### The COFACE Administrative Council members:

- ▶ Elisabeth Potzinger (AT),
- ▶ Madeleine Guyot (BE),
- ▶ Jeroen Sleurs (BE),
- ▶ Maria Petkova (BG),
- ▶ Michaela Marksovà (CZ),
- ▶ Sven Iversen (DE),
- ▶ Antonia Torrens (EL),
- ▶ Amaia Echevarria (ES),
- ▶ Marina Wetzer-Karlsson (FI),
- ▶ Jérôme Gourod (FR),
- ▶ Silvija Stanić (HR),
- ▶ Anna Nagy (HU),
- ▶ Mary O'Halloran (IE),
- ▶ Gaetano Santonocito (IT),
- ▶ Rasa Zemaite (LT),
- ▶ Romain Kraemer (LU),
- ▶ Marchita Mangiafico (MT),
- ▶ Gonçalo Solla (PT),
- ▶ Peter Grabner (SI),
- ▶ Karolina Andrian (PL),
- ▶ Chantal Bruno (COFACE Disability Platform for the rights of persons with disabilities and their families).

### The four Executive Bureau members:

- ▶ Antonia Torrens (EL), President
- ▶ Karolina Andrian (PL) - Treasurer
- ▶ Sven Iversen (DE) - Vice-President
- ▶ Amaia Echevarria (ES) - Vice-President.

All the members of the **COFACE Disability platform** for the rights of persons with disabilities and their families, and namely the co-chairs of the platform: Chantal Bruno (APF France Handicap) and Sylvie Hirtz (APEMH).

Our **COFACE Secretariat** in Brussels, in charge of ensuring the organisation of all those activities, in close cooperation with COFACE members and partners. In 2025, the Secretariat was made up of Elizabeth Gosme (Director), Florian Charron (Finance Director), Martin Schmalzried (Senior Policy and Advocacy Manager), Holly Shorey (Senior Project and Advocacy Officer), Attila Bóhm (Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer), Martino Serapioni (Senior Research Coordinator), Beatrijs Gelders (Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer), Sebastian Gonzalez (Policy and Advocacy Officer), Cloë Rossenbacker (Project and Advocacy officer), Ida Björklund (Communication Officer) and Zoé Lardou (Education Programme Coordinator). We would also like to thank Bettina Guigui, Beybin Elvin Tunç and Samira Boumakdi Isabel (former colleagues), and Roosmarie Verberckmoes who joined us for a rEUsilience internship, and of course our COFACE Penguin family.

And last but not least thank you to all our **partners, followers, fans, supporters, colleagues, friends, and of course, our funders: the European Commission and in particular, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, and the OAK Foundation.**

## JOIN US!

- Is your organisation an NGO representing families or services to families?
- Do you want to join an international community of practice to work collectively in the interest of families?
- Do you want to become an expert on EU family matters?
- Do you have a local innovation you would like to scale up across other EU countries?
- Are you looking for best practices from other countries or seeking to set up new European projects?

If you are interested in any of the above,  
you're in the right place.



105/b48 Rue du Marché aux Herbes,  
1000 Bruxelles, Belgium  
+32 2 500 56 90  
[secretariat@coface-eu.org](mailto:secretariat@coface-eu.org)  
[www.coface-eu.org](http://www.coface-eu.org)

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