

Terms of Reference (TOR) The Platform for Children's Rights (The Platform)

Purpose of the Platform for Children's Rights

The Platform is an informal grouping of NGOs, UN agencies (represented by UNICEF), and EU institutions with the primary interest of exchanging information on children's rights initiatives at EU level. The Platform may also work together to advocate for the efficient implementation of the UN CRC in EU policies and programmes, principally by supporting the work of the Action Group on the EU Child Rights Strategy (The Action Group). This includes promoting and facilitating meaningful participation of civil society and children in this process.

The Platform for Children's Rights can also be an arena for other complementary groups working on issues related to children's rights such as the EU action group on HIV & AIDS and OVC, the CAAC / child protection in emergencies coalition, the trafficking group and the human rights and democracy network to share information and raise awareness on upcoming initiatives.

Membership of the Platform on Children's Rights

Participants of the group are not for profit organisations which engage at EU level to promote children's rights in and outside the EU. UN agencies represented by UNICEF may play an active role in the group and EU institutions may participate as observers, both will publish their public statements separately.

As an informal grouping, newcomers to The Platform will be admitted if none of the current members object.

NGO Platform – working methods

Members of The Platform meet together twice a year. The designated representative at these meetings will be mandated to take decisions.

The principle communication method for the group is the web-based 'Yahoo' group, which will also store key all key documents.

Please see http://groups.yahoo.com/group/childrights_EU/

The Platform's relationship to the Action Group

The Action Group is an informal grouping of organisations which have committed to work together on the follow up and implementation of the European Commission Communication, 'Towards and EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child' (see separate TOR for more information). The Action Group will share its workplan with The Platform. Any members of The Platform wishing to play a more active role in certain activities of the workplan are encouraged to do so. The Action Group will also send all key message documents and statements to The Platform for possible endorsement by The Platform.

Approval Process for documents

In principle, any statement sent by the Action Group for endorsement by The Platform will allow 5 working days for approval. The statement can then be sent out under the name of The Platform, with those organisations endorsing the statement clearly footnoted. Organisations will not be footnoted unless they give their approval. If one or more organisations from The Platform object to the statement, the statement may not go

out under the name of The Platform. Instead, it will be sent out under the name of the Action group, including the names of any further organisations from The Platform who have endorsed the statement.

Urgent statements requiring a rapid turnaround, and only allowing a limited time for endorsement will go out under the name of the Action Group, with further organisations who have endorsed the statement mentioned in footnote.

Coordinators of The Platform and The Action Group.

The two coordinators of The Platform will be selected by members at the biannual meetings and they will also act as coordinators of the Action Group. Ideally, there will be at least one organisation working on internal EU issues and one organisation working on external issues to ensure a balanced approach. Each coordinator will have a mandate for one year, but votes for coordinators will be staggered, so that at each bi-annual meeting, one coordinator will remain, and one new coordinator will be voted in. The coordinators will be responsible for chairing meetings and preparing agendas. The coordinators will also be responsible for keeping a record of information and activities of The Platform and the Action Group, in assisting in coordinating actions and identifying potential duplication of activities, and following up with members on commitments and to make sure the work is completed. Coordinators of the Group are not responsible for design or implementation of the strategy and commitments of The Platform; this is the responsibility of each Platform member which agrees to undertake these activities.

Voting system for the coordinators

There is one vote per member organisation. Coordinators will be voted into office upon receiving a majority of votes cast, although The Platform would aim to reach consensus. Votes will, where necessary, be conducted by secret ballot. In exceptional cases, and with appropriate justification, proxy votes may be given in to members. These exceptions will be reviewed by the coordinators, who will make a final decision.