

**Question for oral answer O-000012/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 136

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Subject: The backlash against children's rights due to COVID-19 containment measures

Children, despite being less affected by the virus itself, are bearing a disproportionate burden of the COVID-19 pandemic, notably in terms of the lockdown measures. Nurseries, kindergartens and schools have been closed for months, affecting not only children's education, but also their nutrition, growth, social development and protection. Remote schooling has increased inequality in education, in particular digital exclusion, including shortages of computers and a lack of internet access. Containment measures have led to an increase in violence within families, while children's right to play has also been undermined. Social protection responses often fail to cater to the needs of children and their families.

Moreover, COVID-19 and the ensuing containment measures has posed a particular threat to the rights of children with disabilities, children living in institutions, and Roma and migrant children.

UNICEF identifies common risk factors for violence, abuse and neglect associated with COVID-19, namely:

- greater poverty and food insecurity due to the loss of jobs and incomes;
- the disruption of peer and social support networks for children and caregivers;
- the disruption of community and social support services for children and caregivers;
- a breakdown in the routines of children and caregivers;
- increased alcohol and/or substance use by caregivers;
- ad hoc childcare arrangements.

The pandemic is quickly turning into a broader children's rights crisis. The rights, development and futures of our children are under threat. Ensuring that parents and caregivers are able to support children during this period and do not have to endure cuts to their incomes cannot be seen as a mere expense. On the contrary, it should be seen as an investment in the quality of children's lives for a better future.

1. What kinds of measures is the Commission taking to address this rising backlash?
2. In an effort to combat it, is the Commission endeavouring to mobilise a rapid research response to provide the evidence needed to scale up rapid assessments and urgently develop strategies and prepare interventions together with the Member States?

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Lapses: 02/06/2021