

**COFACE Families Europe and Family Initiative
European Expert Meeting**

**The position of larger families with children in society:
strengths and barriers**

Tuesday 15th March 2022

9.00-16.00

Ljubljana, Slovenia

BACKGROUND

This is why the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights is so important – to ensure decent jobs, fairer working conditions, better healthcare and better balance in people’s lives. If the pandemic taught us one thing, it is that time is precious. And caring for someone you love is the most precious time of all.

State of the European Union speech, President von der Leyen, 15 September 2021

About the hosts

COFACE Families Europe is a European civil society network representing families (all types, without discrimination), through its 50+ organisations across 23 countries, shaping EU policy and legislation which impacts families: www.coface-eu.org. We monitor a wide range of policies which impact the lives of families and children including worklife balance, disability, education, consumer policy, migration and digitalisation.

The Family Initiative is an association for a family-friendly society that connects primarily parents and other people who consider for family’s needs. They have combined knowledge and influence since 1998 to make Slovenia a family-friendly society. They monitor what the government does or not in the field of family policy and inform the wider community about families and their needs. We also work with government to improve family policy on national level. The Family Initiative is a full member of COFACE.

The approach of the European Expert Meeting

Using the COFACE Child Compass as a starting point, this European Expert Meeting focuses on the features of large families and the challenges they experience in Europe today, taking stock of the situation in different countries and collecting good practices. The reflections will be based on the premise that all children must have equal opportunities and be treated equally regardless of their family settings, and modern 21st-century family support systems should be able to factor in this diversity of needs without discrimination. This European Expert Meeting will be held in hybrid format (offline/online) for COFACE members, local participants in Slovenia, and EU stakeholders working on similar goals.

The objectives of the European Expert Meeting

- Connect the Slovenian and European realities on families;
- Build on the findings of the 2020 COFACE expert meeting on single parent families and large families;
- Collect information on changing patterns in large families of today, including blended and recomposed families;
- Consult national/regional/local level civil society on innovative practices in supports to large families;
- Encourage knowledge transfer across EU countries on promoting the rights of families and children;
- Develop common actions and positions, to mainstream the family perspective in EU policy discussions on the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, the EU child guarantee, the transposition of the EU Work-life balance directive, the EU Child Rights strategy and more.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

09.00-9.30	Welcome Tomaž Merše, President of Family Initiative Annemie Drieskens, President of COFACE Families Europe Toma Sutic, Member of Cabinet of European Commission Vice-President Dubravka Šuica
9.30-10.00	Overview of the Slovenian context for large families Janez Cigler Kralj, Minister for work, family, and social affairs, Slovenia
10.00-10.45	Interrelated well-being of children and their families in a changing world <i>This opening session will set the discussions in a wider EU and global context. Families have a key role in society and the economy. Much has been demanded of families, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis during which families stepped in as “social safety nets”. However the supports and incentives put in place are not always adapted to their care duties and support needs or family arrangements.</i> <i>Keynote</i> Dominic Richardson, Chief, Social and Economic policy, UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti Q&A
10.45-11.15	Tea break

11.15-12.15	<p>Families with more children and the education system <i>This session will focus on the challenges in education, highlighting the increased costs for larger families in Slovenia, while also exploring the benefits of mutual assistance of siblings in education and other benefits of larger families in an educational context.</i></p> <p><i>Keynote :</i> Anton Meden PhD, a father of five and former president of Association of Parents' Council Working Groups of Slovenia, Slovenia <i>Reaction:</i> Antonia Torrens, Director of KMOP Greece and COFACE Vice-President</p> <p>Q&A</p>
12.15-13.15	<p>Family-friendly housing policies <i>This session will reflect on the links between family and housing policies, with a focus on putting family well-being at the heart of economic development at local level taking the policies of Trentino (Italy) as a starting point for discussion.</i></p> <p><i>Keynote:</i> Luciano Malfer, Director, Agenzia per la Famiglia, Trento, Italy <i>Reaction:</i> Peter Grabner, Member of Family Initiative and COFACE board member for Slovenia</p> <p>Q&A</p>
13.15-14.15	<p>Lunch break</p>
14.15-15.15	<p>Attitudes and perceptions of large families <i>This session will focus on perception of large families and their demographic relevance, as well as the role of large families in environmental sustainability. We will examine how measures can support large families of all types, including recomposed and blended large families.</i></p> <p><i>Keynote :</i> Balazs Molnar, Vice-President of Maria Kopp Institute for Demography and Families <i>Reaction:</i> Amaia Echevarria, Director of UNAF Spain and COFACE board member for Spain</p> <p>Q&A</p>
15.15-16.00	<p>The role of Europe to support large families <i>The European Union has put in place in number of measures (legal and policy) to support policies in different ways to benefit from access to resource, services and time to enable them to achieve work-life balance. This session will sum up some of the key messages during the day and look at existing and upcoming European initiatives and how these support large families.</i></p> <p><i>Keynotes:</i> Annemie Drieskens, President of COFACE Stefan Iszkowski, European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs</p> <p>Q&A</p>
16.00-16.15	<p>Conclusions and next steps Elizabeth Gosme, Director, COFACE Families Europe</p>