



1st Session – Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group to explore the possibility of, elaborating and submitting to the Human Rights Council a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Panel Topic 3: Recognition of early childhood care and education (ECCE) as part of the right to education

Oral Statement

Make Mothers Matter speaks from the perspective of mothers and other primary caregivers: the individuals who provide children with the earliest and most consistent foundation for growth and learning. Recognising Early Childhood Care and Education (or ECCE) as an integral part of the right to education also means acknowledging the value of care itself: the daily nurturing care work within families, communities, and societies that enables early learning.

Early childhood is a unique, foundational period for learning and development. Investing in quality early childhood care and education is the best investment that a nation can make. This means ensuring that pre primary education, early learning, and support for parents as first educators is available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable.

All UN Member States have committed to SDG target 4.2 and endorsed the Education 2030 Framework for Action, renewed by the 2022 Tashkent Declaration. Evidence shows that integrated ECCE ecosystems linking care and education with health, nutrition, and social protection deliver the most equitable outcomes. These systems are strongest when they also support parents, recognising their central role.

Every day, mothers and other caregivers carry the invisible weight of early childhood development. When systems are under resourced, they often lack affordable childcare, quality pre primary options, or adequate support-including parenting education. Caring for an infant or a young child is a rewarding work, but it is time and energy consuming. And it has costs for mothers as this often forces them to leave the workforce or accept part-time low-paid and often precarious jobs, exacerbating inequalities. The recent MMM survey on the state of motherhood in Europe also highlights maternal mental health as a critical factor, with direct consequences for children's well-being during these early years.

Recognising that children's rights and mothers' rights are linked means adopting a holistic vision. By valuing and investing in ECCE, Member States can both realise children's rights and rebalance women's disproportionate and unfair unpaid care responsibilities.

Make Mothers Matter calls on all Member States to recognise the critical importance of ECCE in a 4th option protocol to the CRC and take the following actions:

- Affirm ECCE in law as part of the right to education from birth, including in constitutions and education legislation. Guaranteeing at least one year of free, compulsory pre-primary for every child as a minimum.

- Address child poverty and guarantee inclusion for every child and caregiver. Ensure reasonable fees and eliminate hidden costs, strengthen quality and public monitoring, and ensure access for children with disabilities, migrants, refugees, children from single-parent households, and all those in vulnerable situations with particular support for the mothers who care for them.
- Build holistic systems that support families. Link education with health, nutrition, disability inclusion, and social protection. Guarantee universal parenting programmes and access to affordable, quality childcare so that children thrive and mothers are able to balance care and work.
- Value and support the ECCE workforce as essential workers. Provide professional training, fair pay, and recognition for teachers and caregivers, most of whom are women, many mothers themselves.

Recognising ECCE as part of the right to education and investing accordingly is the surest way to give every child a strong start, while upholding the rights and dignity of mothers and caregivers. It is investing in our common future.

Thank you.

About Make Mothers Matter

Make Mothers Matter is an international NGO founded in 1947 to promote the recognition and support of the essential role of mothers in society. MMM envisions a world where women who are mothers are supported by society and can balance motherhood with their personal and professional aspirations, without being penalised. MMM brings the voices and lived realities of mothers to global platforms, including the EU, the UN (General Consultative Status), and UNESCO, ensuring they are heard, acknowledged and addressed.