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## **MEPs request an EU programme for children who lost parents to Covid-19**

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27 MEPs from all EP groups and 15 Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain) have requested the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit for a dedicated relief and assistance mechanism to help EU children losing one or two parents due to Covid-19.

So far, almost 800 000 people have lost their lives due to the new coronavirus in the EU, and in many cases, a death from Covid-19 disease is associated with the child orphanhood, the letter initiated by Romanian MEP Vlad Gheorghe (Renew Europe) shows. Gheorghe points out that children surviving parents and/or custodial grandparents find themselves in an extremely vulnerable position. Numerous researchers warn of the considerably increased risk of poverty and social exclusion, abuse, school dispersion and a heavy toll on physical and mental health that children all around the world face because of the pandemic. And the European Union is no exception: almost a quarter (22,2%) of children in Europe were exposed to poverty and exclusion even before Covid19.

The MEPs insist that the EU must develop this dedicated mechanism to assist the Member States in their efforts and guarantee that affected children receive equal care all over the Union. Such common action should be adequately financed from the EU funds, with additional contributions coming from private donations, and it is also paramount to make sure that resources reach the beneficiaries directly.

”Affected children should receive economic, psychological and administrative support through this new mechanism all over the EU, in order for them not to suffer any other loss in addition to the trauma of orphanhood. It is our responsibility to make sure these kids have basic goods, access to education and any other type of assistance they might need”, says Vlad Gheorghe who came up with this initiative.

Children’s right to protection from poverty is one of the fundamental principles in the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed back in 2017. Clearly, EU countries still fail to ensure all children enjoy a carefree life, therefore earlier this year the European Child Guarantee was approved, aiming to tackle child poverty and break the intergenerational cycle of inequality and disadvantage. ”Still these instruments are not enough”, underlines the Romanian MEP: ”It is because we are facing an unprecedented humanitarian tragedy a dedicated mechanism of relief with supplementary funding and coordination from the EU is urgently needed - these children have lost their parents, they need not lose anything else to Covid19”, Vlad Gheorghe (Renew Europe) insisted.