



AS THE LIAISON BETWEEN FAMILY ORGANISATIONS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION, COFACE STRIVES TO PROMOTE THE FAMILY DIMENSION IN COMMUNITY POLICIES.

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■ What is coface?

coface is a **pluralistic** organisation, at the heart of **civil society**, which aims at promoting **family policy, solidarity between generations** and the **interests of children** within the European Union.

coface advocates a policy of **non-discrimination** and of **equal opportunities** between persons and between family forms, and specifically supports policies aiming at **equality between women and men**.

coface was originally founded in 1958 as the European Action Committee of the International Union of Family Organisations (IUFO). Over time, it gained more independence, and in 1979 turned itself into an international not-for-profit voluntary organisation with the name Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Community, now the European Union.

coface links together general and single-issue national family organisations. In 2010, it has above 50 member organisations across 21 Member States of the European Union. As such, it gives a voice to many millions of parents and children.

■ How is coface organised?

coface's structures are organised in such a way as to guarantee real representativeness.

The General Assembly, open to representatives of all member organisations, defines each year the general guidelines for action.
The Administrative Council is coface's most important deliberative body.
The Executive Bureau monitors the implementation of decisions taken by the Administrative Council.

Five working groups of which the specific association coface-Handicap, draw up reports, draft recommendations and position papers for submission to the Administrative Council and /or the General Assembly for adoption. The recommendations and policy positions as adopted become official coface positions.

The five groups address five broad areas of key relevance to families in Europe:

- ★ Family and Social Policies
- ★ Inclusive Policies for Disabled and other Dependent Persons and their Families (coface-Handicap)
- ★ Consumer Protection, Services and Public Health Policies
- ★ Education and Information and Communication Technologies (TIC)
- ★ Exchange of information and experiences : mutual learning & capacity building.

The Secretariat, established in Brussels, represents coface and is responsible for its daily operation.

coface is officially represented in various consultative bodies of the European Union. It has regular contacts with the European authorities, in particular the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Economic and Social Committee.

coface is a founding member of the European Social Platform and of the European Disability Forum. It collaborates regularly with other important stakeholders at EU level such as the social partners, other European NGOs,...

With the support of the European Progress programme and in the spirit of the European Year 2010, coface emphasizes the fight against poverty and social exclusion of families : policies supporting families represent major contributions to the prevention of such situations.



■ What are coface's aims?

Numerous decisions or orientations taken at European level directly affect family life.

The impact of EU policies on parents and children is such that there is a need for the shaping of a European family policy. Such a policy can be defined as the family dimension to be incorporated into the economic, social and cultural policies and initiatives drawn up at European level, in one word : "Family mainstreaming".

With a view to promoting such a policy, coface works in three complementary directions :

- ★ As spokesperson for family organisations, it liaises with the European authorities in all sectors relating to the rights and interests of families.
- ★ It informs national organisations of developments in the European Union, and encourages greater awareness of the Community dimension.
- ★ It organises exchanges of ideas and experiences as well as mutual aid between family organisations in different countries, e.g. via projects.

Over the years, coface's action has contributed to the development of Community policy in areas such as the promotion of consumer interests, social protection, equal opportunities, the fight against social exclusion and discrimination, programmes to help disabled people and their families, demographic issues, the promotion of health and education, civil society, ... The family dimension is therefore gradually being given a place in the field of European initiatives. coface is committed to furthering this.

coface wishes to intensify its co-operation with the various European institutions and calls on them to :

- ★ consult coface on all policy matters with a family dimension,
- ★ organise, on a yearly basis, a meeting of the Council of Ministers responsible for family policies,
- ★ guarantee the successful operation and development of the European Alliance for Families, adopted by the European Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2007,
- ★ take all relevant measures for the prevention of poverty and social exclusion of families.

