

Thierry Cornillet

Brussels, 14th June 2018

Dear President Juncker,
Dear Commissioner Mimica,
Dear Commissioner Stylianides,

Globally there are an estimated 230 million “ghost children”. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone, thus in some of the ACP countries which are partners of the EU, UNICEF estimates that this concerns 95 million children¹.

These “ghost children” are children who have not been registered with the state and who do not have a birth certificate.

This lack of registration and documentation prevents the legal recognition of the child and as a consequence their social existence from birth and throughout adulthood.

These children are not able to go to school, they are not able to work officially and they often end up impoverished, and in countries in conflict they are perfect prey for militias.

This situation, which is as much the result of local customs and the lack of reflex to declare a birth as the absence of adapted structures in the countries concerned, can be resolved, provided that the appropriate resources are made available.

This will happen by building on the strengths of each responsible actor. In the front row are naturally the governments of the states concerned because the registration of births is by definition the responsibility of the state.

These states need to make the necessary funds available to tackle the issue and to put appropriate solutions in place (electronic declarations, mobile registration offices, awareness raising campaigns etc.).

It is at this level that the Commission can provide crucial support.

The European Commission should consider proposing a targeted financial support programme, dedicated specifically to the problems experienced from birth concerning the lack of civil status

¹ https://www.unicef.org/french/publications/files/UNICEF_SOWC_2016_French_LAST.pdf

of an individual and to the proven personal catch-up required by those affected by the absence of a birth certificate

This programme could be financed, initially, by using available funds within the current assistance framework, such as the European Development Fund or the Development Cooperation Instrument.

We, MEPs, intend to use the upcoming negotiations of the new Multiannual Financial Framework to ensure that a specific action programme is created in order to support the reinforcement of the civil status of all. This would contribute to changing the lives of millions of children.

We remain at your disposal to discuss this initiative at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Thierry Cornillet
Member of the European Parliament