

COFACE Families Europe
strategic framework
2021-2030



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I. Mission, Vision, Core values



COFACE Families Europe

COFACE Families Europe was founded in 1958. With 50+ member organisations in 23 European countries, COFACE Families Europe is a pluralistic network which represents millions of families, volunteers, and professionals.

COFACE member organisations respond at national or regional level to the needs of all families, as well as focusing on families in vulnerable situations: families at risk of poverty, single parent and large families, migrant families, same-sex families, families with a disabled or chronically ill member, families living in areas with limited services, including childcare and health services. COFACE Families Europe obtained UN special consultative status in 2014, and since then continues to bring a European perspective to global discussions.

Our mission is to promote the well-being, health and security of families and their members in a changing society and serve as a trusted entity for family mainstreaming and for the voice/needs of families in the EU and beyond.

Our vision is to work towards a family-friendly environment, enabling all families and their members to benefit from sufficient financial resources, available quality services and adequate time arrangements in order to live, be fully included in the community, and enjoy their family life in dignity and harmony.

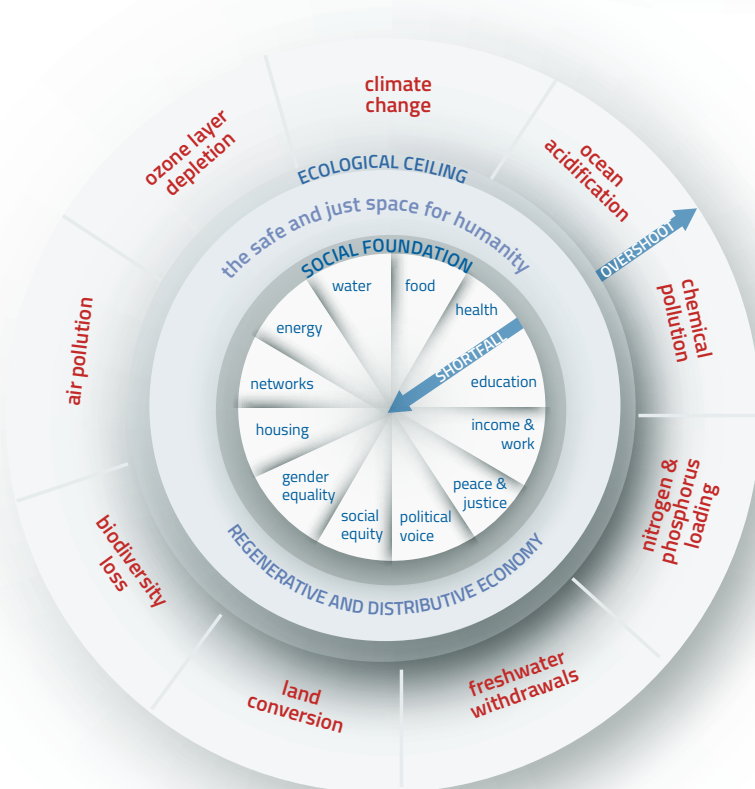
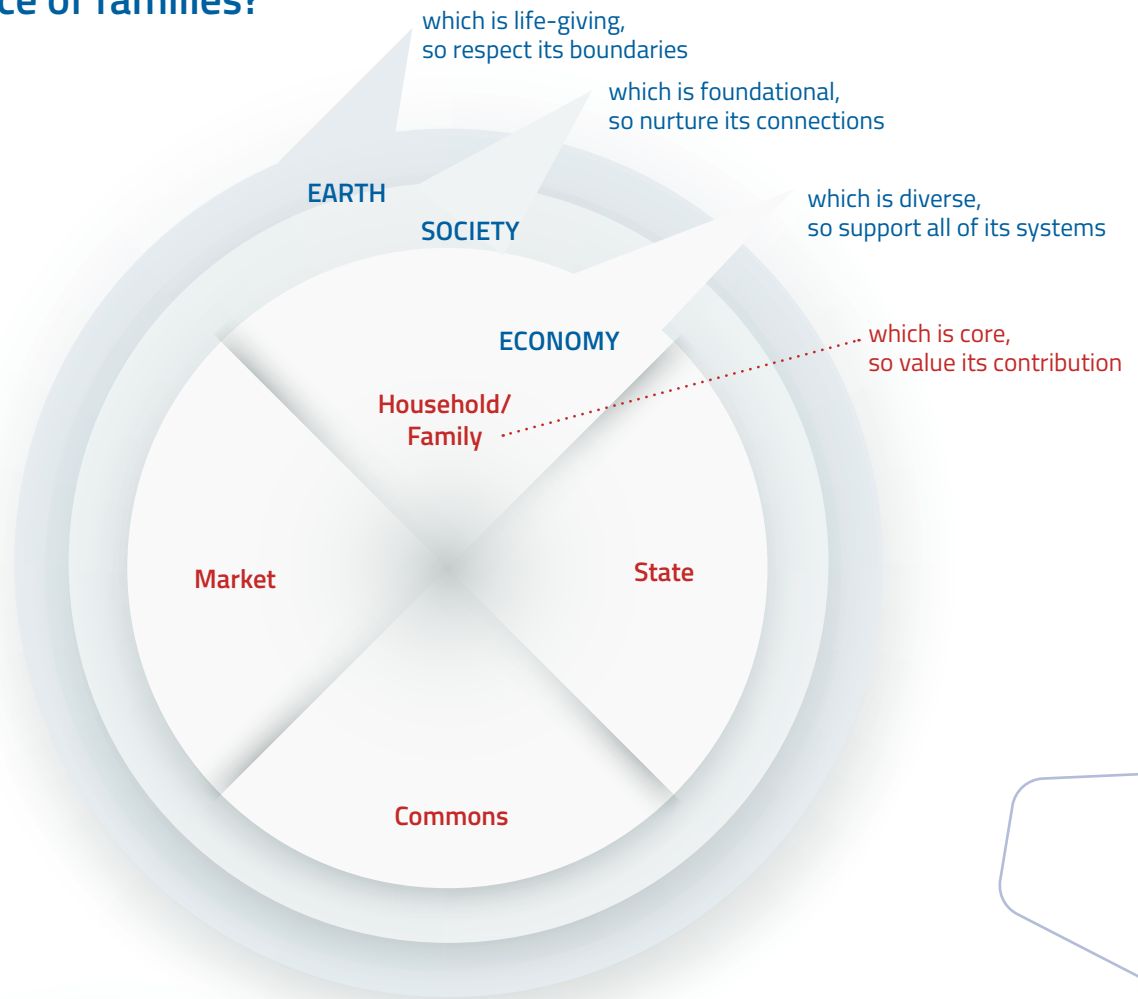
Core Values

COFACE Families Europe is rooted in a set of six core values:

- 1 Non-discrimination.** We recognise all family forms.
- 2 Equal opportunities.** We believe equality between women and men is a cornerstone for the reconciliation of family and professional life.
- 3 Respect of human rights.** We seek to advance the rights of families and their members to a decent quality of life.
- 4 Empowerment.** We aim to give a voice to all family members as citizens, consumers and workers.
- 5 Social inclusion.** We advocate for the shaping of policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion of families.
- 6 Solidarity.** We promote intergenerational solidarity between family members.

II. The bigger picture: think global

What is the place of families?



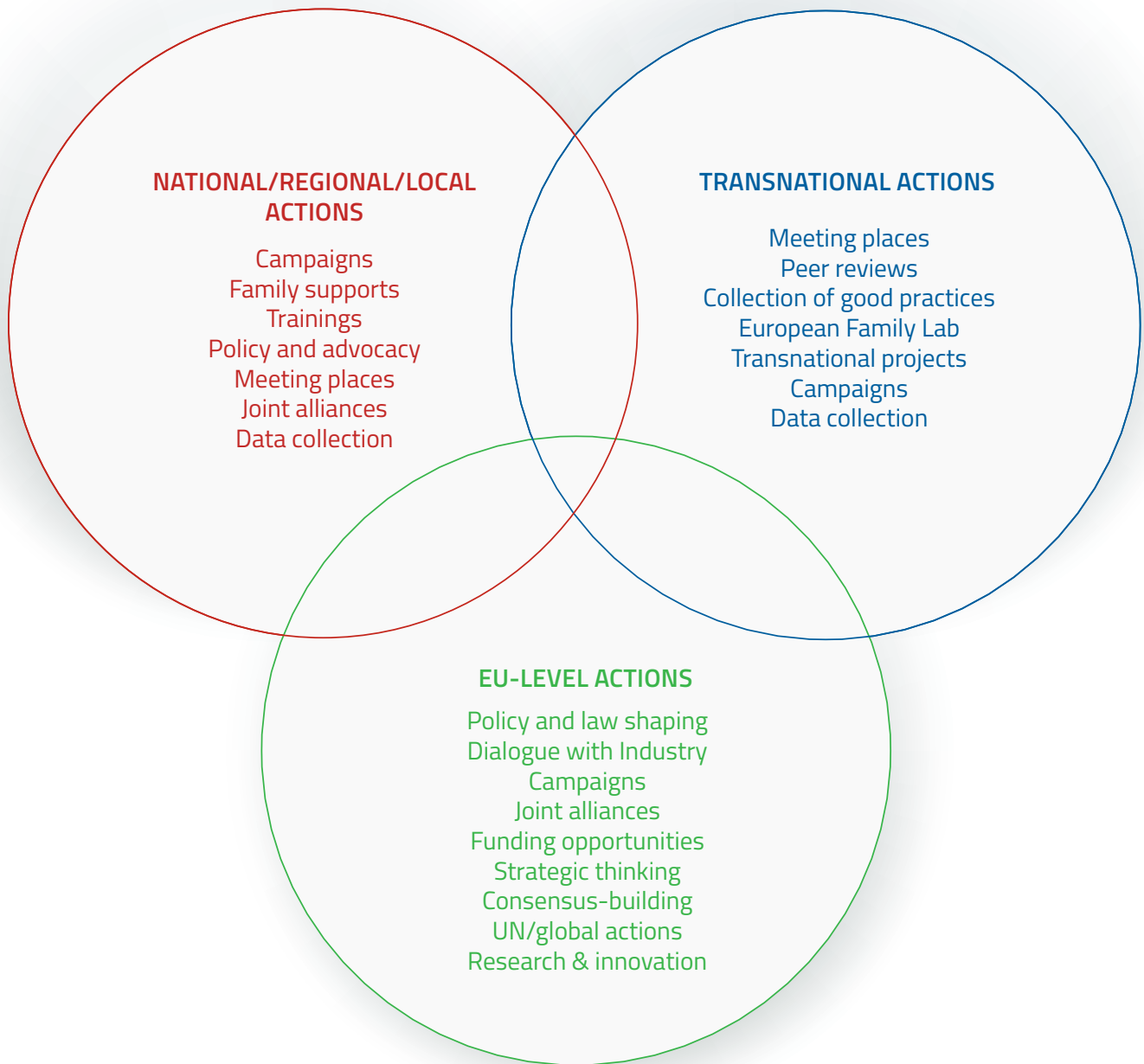
Doughnut economics

COFACE has expanded its vision using the **Doughnut economics** model by Kate Raworth as a starting point. The doughnut model is a holistic approach ensuring the economic system works for social and environmental sustainability.

This approach together with the 2030 **Sustainable Development Goals**, helps to frame the work of COFACE in a global context where different world regions are increasingly connected and working together. COFACE has clearly set out the role of civil society organisations in achieving the SDGs.

Last, but not least, COFACE work is driven by **United Nations conventions** and specifically the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

III. Multilevel European network with actions at 3 levels



National actions of COFACE members

Transnational actions between members facilitated by COFACE secretariat

EU-level actions by COFACE secretariat and members

IV. State of Play for Families of Today: challenges and benchmarks

The *New Deal for Families of Today* adopted in 2019 at the start of the 2019-2024 European Commission mandate formulates clear recommendations to the EU institutions to support families of all types without discrimination. The challenges highlighted in the New Deal have unfortunately been magnified by the COVID-19 crisis which has had devastating effects across the world and EU countries have been hard hit. This crisis, by putting on the spotlight the vulnerabilities of certain populations, highlighted that the social systems in place are not fulfilling their role in creating fair, equal and accessible societies for all. The COFACE *policy brief on the changing face of work and family life under COVID-19* highlights some impacts and new measures taken to mitigate the situation. But the poverty rates are increasing dramatically through the continent and studies show that families with children are among the ones feeling the most negative impacts of the pandemic. It is in this difficult context for families, civil society organisations and Europe, that COFACE strived to deliver quality and impactful outputs for Europe's families and the EU social agenda. COFACE formulated *8 recommendations to help families and the economy bounce back*, which serve to prioritise actions at different levels.

Now, more than ever, it is important to connect professionals in real time through transnational exchanges in order to tackle the social impacts of COVID-19 on families and children. We launched our European Family Lab to make different NGO family supports more visible and accessible to COFACE members and partners, to help build impactful family support in a complex world.

For each challenge highlighted below COFACE has positions, studies and benchmarks to measure policy progress and impact.

Work-life balance and family-friendly workplaces

The **gender care gap** is slowly but steadily closing in many countries, as more fathers receive paternity and adequate parental leave benefits, driven by the minimum standards of the EU work-life balance directive. But much still remains to close the gender care gap to support work-life balance for all, as indicated in our position paper *Families on the Edge: Building a Comprehensive Work-life balance reality*.

Gender equal and caring economy

Family carers of children and adults with disabilities still take on a huge burden in some countries, without enough social recognition nor access to social rights such as respite, pension rights, financial compensation, adequately paid carers' leaves. These challenges were highlighted by 1000+ family carers in our *Who Cares? Study on the challenges and needs of family carers in Europe*. The key steps needed to address this are set out in the *COFACE Disability European Charter for Family Carers*.

Social inclusion & poverty prevention

Job losses linked to the economic crises of 2008 and 2020 mean that an increasing number of families are **threatened by social exclusion and poverty**, making it essential to build a preventative safety net based on access to resources, services and time arrangements. There is a need more than ever to push for universal family policies which support families and children in vulnerable situations (single parent families, large families, migrant families, rainbow families, blended families, families with disabilities) in ways which prevent differentiation and social stigma, but measures the intensity of care and support needed.

Independent living for all

Persons with disabilities and their families were hugely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, making it ever more pressing to push for their full inclusion through the implementation of the *S.H.I.F.T. guide* developed by the COFACE Disability Platform, highlighting 5 objectives, 15 tools and 45 actions in the areas of Support, Human rights, Independence, Families and society Transition (S.H.I.F.T.).

Financial inclusion

Our *key recommendations* to boost the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights will help assess the actions taken to ensure a rebalancing of economic and social priorities. The reports of the seminars on *Economics at the service of society* and *Unlocking new economic thinking for a sustainable future* will bring the COFACE reflections beyond social policy and into economic and environmental policy. **An economic and financial system that works for both growth and well-being of families** remains an essential challenge, through targeted measures to promote financial inclusion and prevent over-indebtedness (as highlighted in the COFACE *Financial Inclusion Compendium* and *Inclusive financial models*), but also through wider economic reflections for a more sustainable future.

Inclusive education and societies

Our **vision for inclusive societies** is set out in the reflection paper on *Building Inclusive Societies: First steps to bridging the gaps between family, education and migration policies*. Inclusive and democratic societies require a strongly inclusive education system to ensure all children get a fair start in life, and are not pushed into segregated settings which exclude them from society at the youngest age. This means from the earliest age with inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care, as set out in our *New Deal for ECEC* and our *Recommendations on Inclusive Education* for children with disabilities linked to the UNCRPD.

Digital citizenship & harnessing the potential of technology

The **global shift online of working, schooling, socializing due to the pandemic** has made it more important for COFACE to implement its *13 Digitalisation principles* ensuring that families can be empowered to harness the full potential of technology, to interact online in all safety and privacy through a mix of regulatory frameworks, self-regulation by the relevant ICT industries and education with the support of COFACE members (as highlighted in the COFACE *Digital Families Map*) and key partners. Research on the impact of the constantly evolving digital transformations on children and families is needed to ensure adequate policies and legislation can keep up with digital innovations, and the *DigiGen Horizon2020* consortium helps to fill such research gaps.

Child rights and family well-being

The **interrelated well-being of children and their families** is demonstrated clearly in the 2030 Child Compass as a core principle to shape a healthy society, environment, and economy fit for children. This will guide us in providing input for the EU Child Guarantee and EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. The Compass situates the child and their family at the core of a system with 5 priority and interlinked spheres of influence on individual child and family health and well-being: Education, Community, Digital Technology, Economy, and Environment. This means addressing early childhood from different angles, including *(cyber-)bullying prevention, stereotypes in early childhood, providing a healthy start in life through good nutrition*, also building bridges with key industries which have a huge impact on children and their families (advertising, food, ICT).

V. Supporting 8 positive outcomes for families of today

Achieving 8 positive outcomes...



...for families and society



Work-life balance & family-friendly workplaces

Promoting family policy systems based on a mix of Resources, Services and Time arrangements to allow families to live in dignity.



Social inclusion & poverty prevention

Boosting early intervention family supports ensuring they reach families in vulnerable situations, harnessing the opportunities of demographic change and migration.



Financial inclusion & an economy that serves society and the planet

Ensure that the economic system achieves a balance of growth, well-being, equity and environmental sustainability.



Digital citizenship & harness the potential of technology

Ensure policies empower children and families for reaping the benefits of digitalization, while critically harnessing the potential of technology for learning, entertainment, socialising, working, and democratic participation.



Child rights and family well-being

Implement the 2030 Child Compass vision to build a healthy environment, society and economy fit for children and their families.



Gender equal & caring economy

Closing the gender care gap, securing full social recognition of family carers, and ensuring their access to social rights.



Independent living for all, family carers and persons with disabilities

Focus on implementation of the S.H.I.F.T. guide for the meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities and their families.



Inclusive education and societies

Boosting inclusive education from early childhood to ensure all children have a decent start in life, as a basis to build fully inclusive societies respectful of families in all their diversity.

VI. Four strategic objectives

Harness the potential of the European Union to support the achievement of 8 positive outcomes for families and society

Objective 1. EU advocacy

- Consolidate the EU social agenda for families based on legislative and non-legislative actions, and support the wider recognition of social concerns in other policy fields which impact the well-being and fundamental rights of families.
- Build cooperation with EU-level networks for joint advocacy and reinforced implementation of social policy.
- Promoted evidence-based advocacy by monitoring and integrating available COFACE data and external data in EU discussions

Objective 3. Dissemination and awareness raising

- Ensure an ongoing civil society watchdog function to raise awareness about new trends and emerging challenges for families at EU and national level.
- Foster transfer of knowledge across countries with a view to develop and disseminate innovative policy and practice, including through the European Family Lab.
- Build various online information and advocacy campaigns to disseminate COFACE/EU activities strategically to local communities in Europe and beyond.

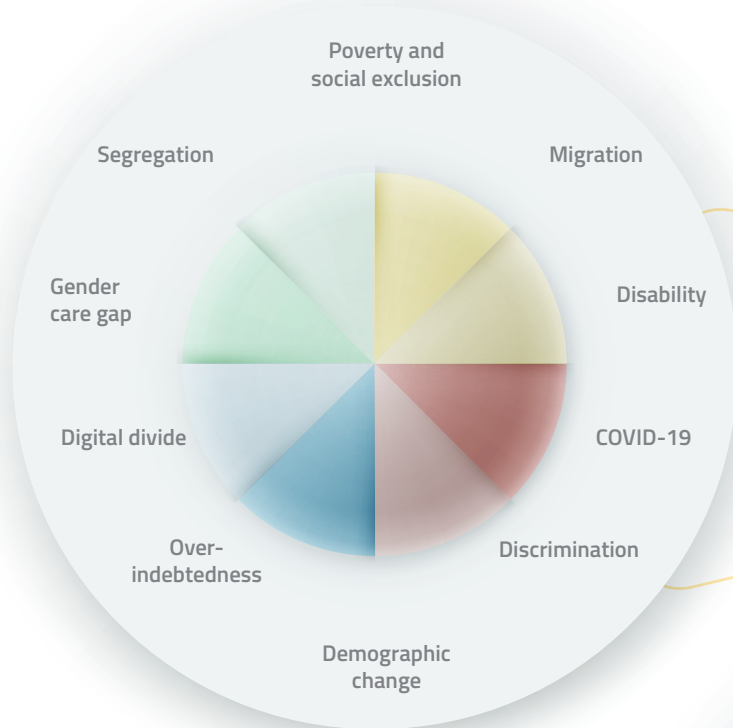
Objective 2. Build bridges

- Mainstream the family dimension in EU policy and law-making, by feeding in new social developments and challenges highlighted by national family organisations.
- Support the capacity of national organisations to monitor and implement EU policies, and their impact on citizens.
- Build bridges between European and local needs through various channels.
- Go deeper into the grassroots of COFACE, via focus groups composed of different types of families to assess their needs: Family carers, persons with disabilities, single parents, large families, rainbow families, children.

Objective 4. Network management

- Ensure a strong voice for families at EU level, by facilitating internal and open democratic governance, consensus-building and legitimate decision-making through strong COFACE statutory bodies.
- Maintain a highly performing staff and a strong, reliable and far-reaching network of excellence based on a sound membership, partnership and finance strategy.
- Build synergies between the different types of expertise in the network (EU policy and family policy/practice) through mutual capacity building between COFACE staff and members.

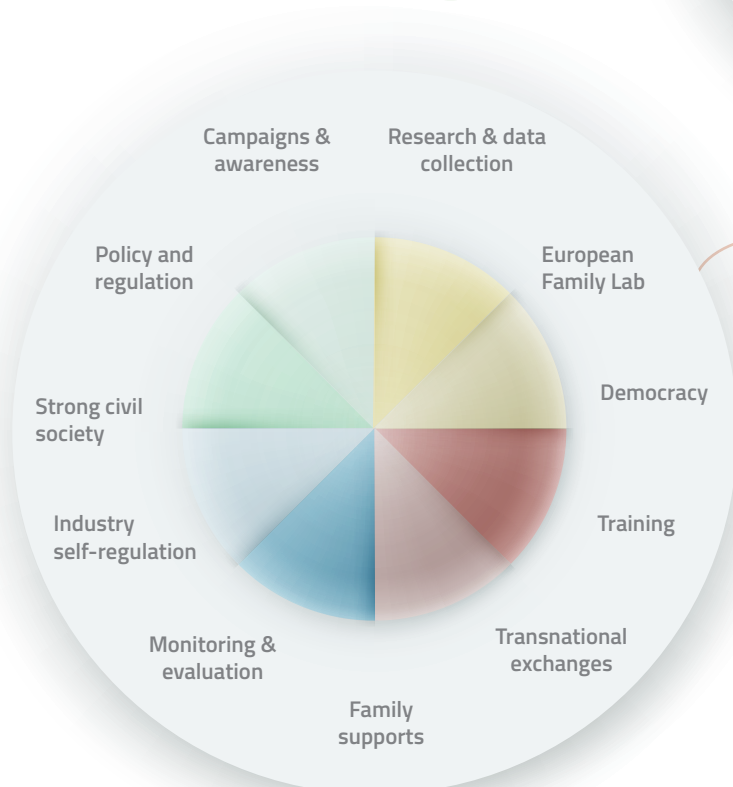
VII. A wide range of tools to tackle key challenges affecting families



Key challenges affecting families

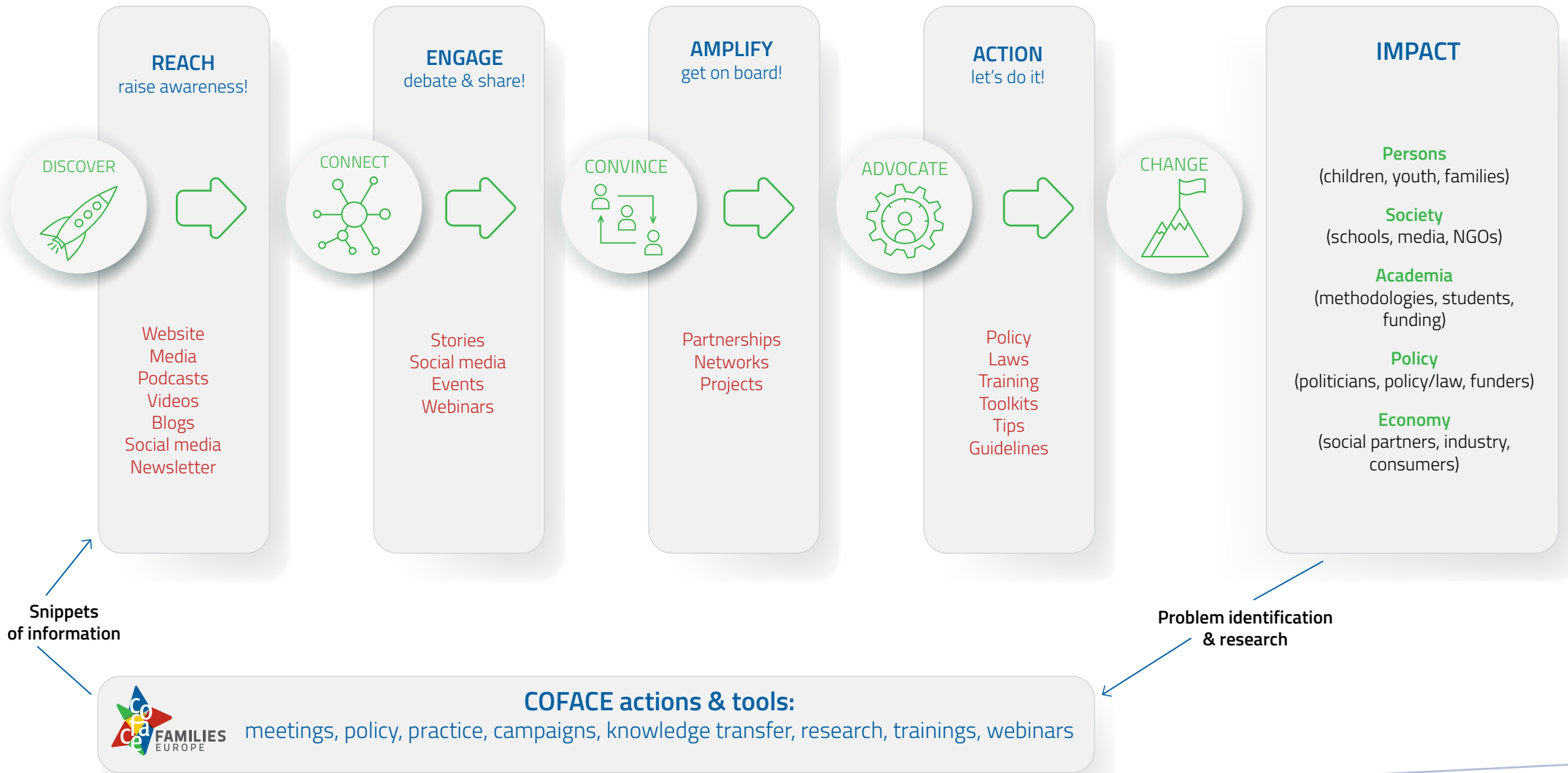


Key EU frameworks to trigger change



Tools for empowerment and human rights implementation

VIII. Generating impact on people, society, the economy





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