

European Parliament – EU Alliance for Investing in Children Manifesto on Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in the EU

Even before the pandemic, approximately 1 in 4 children were growing up at risk of poverty and social exclusion across the European Union (EU). The EU institutions have already taken significant steps towards tackling this issue, notably through the recently published [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#), the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) and the [European Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing the Child Guarantee](#).

The European Parliament, the Intergroup on Children’s Rights and the EU Alliance for Investing in Children¹ are now calling on the Council of the EU and its Member States to be ambitious in the implementation the European Pillar of Social Rights, to adopt the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation as a matter of priority, and to ensure that the Child Guarantee starts being implemented six months from the adoption of the Recommendation.

This manifesto calls on EU Member States to:

- **Develop comprehensive Child Guarantee Action Plans that will be regularly reviewed.**

In these Action Plans, EU Member States should provide a comprehensive overview of the measures taken to tackle child and family poverty and break the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage. Member States should outline the groups of children in need to be prioritised in their responses, taking into consideration their specific vulnerabilities, transparent indication of the use of EU and national budgets, and a timeline of the proposed activities. Member States should set national targets and sub-targets related to child poverty reduction and social inclusion, and include a monitoring and evaluation framework that will take into account the EU and country-specific indicators to measure the progress of the Child Guarantee implementation.

The Action Plans should be reviewed regularly in consultation with relevant stakeholders. EU Member States should have the possibility to update the plans along the way, according to their progress and potential new priorities.

- **Set ambitious national targets to halve child poverty by 2030 and make sure that all children are counted.**

For the first time in the EU’s history, the European Commission has set an EU poverty target to lift at least 5 million children out of poverty by 2030. Although a significant step towards child poverty reduction, this target is not aligned with and not as ambitious as the UN poverty reduction target that aims to end extreme poverty and halve poverty in all its forms by 2030.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, 18 million children in the EU were growing up at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Considering that this already unacceptable figure will increase due to the

¹ The EU Alliance for Investing in Children has been advocating for a multidimensional, rights-based approach to tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being since 2014. This statement was endorsed by the following partner organisations of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children: <http://www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu/>

disastrous socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, EU Member States should aim at ensuring that at least 9 million children are lifted out of poverty by 2030. This can be achieved by setting ambitious national targets and disaggregated sub-targets on child poverty reduction as well as through the gearing of EU policies and better targeting of EU funds.

- **Ensure the meaningful participation of children, of relevant multi-sectoral stakeholders – such as local communities and civil society organisations - as well as of parents and carers in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation.**

To ensure meaningful and rights-based participation, EU Member States must put in place accessible mechanisms that promote children’s participation in decision-making processes that affects their lives and, in particular, in relation to the fulfilment of the Child Guarantee, including outreach measures to ensure the voice of children in need is taken into account. These mechanisms must be informed by available good practices and embedded or sustained across all relevant departments and in the organisational environment of service providers. Monitoring and evaluating progress in child participation should be integrated into the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Child Guarantee Action Plans.

- **Ensure that the Child Guarantee properly feeds into the European Semester process and the country-specific recommendations.**

EU Member States should ensure that the Child Guarantee triggers concrete reforms within the national and local frameworks. Its implementation must be monitored by the well-established policy coordination framework of the European Semester and the revised Social Scoreboard set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

The European Commission and the Social Protection Committee should ensure that the headline and secondary indicators in the revised Social Scoreboard relevant for the EU Child Guarantee are systematically disaggregated by age, gender, geography, country of birth, and ethnic background. They should also ensure the indicators take into account the groups of children in need identified by the Child Guarantee, as well as the territorial dimension of the problem.

In this regard, it is also essential that the EU provides financial assistance to the EU Member States, EUROSTAT and other relevant organisations for data collection and data systems strengthening, as few countries have reliable and consistent data on child poverty and social exclusion, and the accessibility and quality of key Child Guarantee services for children in need.

- **Ensure a more comprehensive approach to the services provided under the Child Guarantee in the areas of nutrition and leisure activities.**

The Recommendation should emphasise the necessity for Member States to set up a comprehensive framework regarding children’s access to healthy nutrition, also outside of the school system. Parents should be supported to provide nutritious meals for their children through in-kind or financial support. Where needed, direct distribution of free meals to children and their families should also be ensured.

Not all Member States have the capacity or the necessary infrastructures to ensure leisure and cultural activities via the formal school system. Member States should include in the Child Guarantee



Recommendation children's equal access to sports, leisure and cultural activities organised outside of the school system and school curricula.

- **Ensure coherence and complementarity between the Child Guarantee and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**

Member States should ensure coherence and complementarity between the comprehensive framework offered by the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation.

EU Member States must take a bold stance against all forms of discrimination on all grounds, including intersectional discrimination, and concerning all groups of children. Segregation in housing, education, healthcare, and other aspects of life also breeds a sectioned view of society, which fuels inequalities and poverty. Preventive, targeted and proactive measures are needed to alter public perceptions and prevalent misrepresentations.

The Child Guarantee should also not present the placement of children in institutional care as a last resort. EU Member States should invest in child protection, high quality support services starting from early childhood interventions to support families and prevent separation, and the provision of quality community- and family-based alternative care. Adequate services should be provided to prepare children leaving care in order to support their independent living and social integration, including for unaccompanied migrant children.

The placement of children in emergency shelters should also be avoided. To prevent and address homelessness, EU Member States should provide stable and adequate housing for children and their families, accompanied by social support services.



This Manifesto is endorsed by the European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community-based care (EEG) ²



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