

EU Alliance for Investing in Children

Recommendations for the European Commission's Call for Evidence on the Revision of the Barcelona Targets on Childcare

Introduction:

The [EU Alliance for Investing in Children](#) (Alliance) welcomes the European Commission's efforts to engage with civil society organisations and collect their views on the upcoming revision of the Barcelona targets on childcare. This document has been drafted through a joint effort of the Alliance members. It provides comprehensive recommendations on numerous areas at the core of the revision, including but not limited to disability, gender equality, social service provisions, children's rights, and marginalised communities.

Recommendations:

- It is key to link the revision of the Barcelona targets/objectives to **improve societal outcomes for children themselves** beyond the increase in women's labour market participation. For example, in terms of better health and well-being, academic achievements, employment opportunities, and quality early childhood education and care possibilities, particularly among disadvantaged population groups.
- The European Commission should ensure a **child-centred and family-centred approach**. Children's rights are best met in the family environment, and the interests of the children can't be defined separately from the interests of the parents, extended family, and immediate communities. Having "family centred" childcare solutions also implies allowing families to choose the best option for their family structure or life cycle stage. This should be complemented by locally /community-based initiatives and care projects.
- The impact of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children from disadvantaged families is twice as high as for those from more advantaged backgrounds. Member States must ensure that **all children and families have a legal entitlement to high quality, inclusive and accessible ECEC**, regardless of the employment status of the parents or carers, of their country of birth, residence status, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background.
- An **increase in investments** is needed to meet the targets. Countries with the highest investment in early years' development programmes and services tend to have better child outcomes overall, including social cognitive and physical health and well-being. This investment must also be directed at **increasing the quality** of the services provided; there is substantial evidence on the benefits of preschool experience in many countries, particularly for high-quality ECEC.
- The European Commission should ensure that **participation of women in the labour market** is achieved for achieving societal and personal developments, not to serve labour market needs; this means ensuring the **focus is on individual needs** – those of women and children in this case - rather than on the market needs.
- The European Commission should ensure an **increased availability and accessibility to disaggregated data** on the lives of **young children under six – especially those under three**. Notably, there is a need for **new targets and indicators** that capture the access to ECEC of the

most disadvantaged children, including children living in extreme poverty, children with disabilities, refugees, and migrant children - including undocumented migrant children - and children from ethnic minorities - especially Roma children as the largest ethnic minority subject to exclusion. This implies **including Roma children as an explicit target group for revising of the Barcelona targets**, including remote, segregated Roma communities. Antigypsyism must be combated in all its forms to ensure that Roma children and their families are not turned away by childcare service providers.

- The revision should also include additional **targets and indicators to assess the quality of ECEC provision**, including those to effectively monitor the professionalisation of staff working in education and care, health, parenting and social protection services for children and implementing measures to enhance the professionalisation and life-long learning of staff.
- The revision should include an additional target and indicator on **net out-of-pocket costs** of childcare for low-income households, disaggregated by children aged 0-3 and 3-6.
- There is a need to focus on **clear and detailed quality standards**, such as ratios, qualifications, size, etc. It would be useful to disaggregate data computing for the number of ECEC hours children access, allowing for the use of ratios such as, for instance, the annual average number of hours of formal care per child aged 1-3.
- The European Commission should set up a **European Care Platform** to promote promising models for funding and quality of care services across Europe, including quality of life for women caregivers.
- The European Commission should support and substantially expand the **development of quality family strengthening programmes** and **early prevention programmes** to enhance the capacity of families to care for children and prevent the separation of children from their families.
- There is a strong need to **coordinate measures to reduce regional disparities** and inequalities in accessing ECEC services. Participation in ECEC services varies enormously between rural/peri-urban and urban areas.
- It will be key to create and nurture synergies with other EU measures and instruments:
 - The EU Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan
 - The Gothenburg Declaration
 - The Council Recommendation on the European Child Guarantee
 - The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child
 - The Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), and its third target for participation in ECEC
 - The European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
 - The Gender Equality Strategy
 - The Work-life Balance Directive
 - The Green Paper on Ageing: Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations
 - The EU4Health Programme and the ERDF/cohesion policy instruments to address regional inequalities in access to/availability of care
 - The European Semester and the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans
 - The EU Framework for Occupational Health and Safety 2021-2027
 - The Council Recommendation on Access to Social Protection

- The Council Conclusions on the Economy of Well-being
- The Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems
- The EU Strategic Framework on Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation

Endnote

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 is endorsed by the following partner organisations of the Alliance:

- Alliance For Childhood
- Caritas Europa
- COFACE Families Europe
- Dynamo International
- EAPN – European Anti-Poverty Network
- EASPD – European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities
- EPA – European Parents’ Association
- EPHA – European Public Health Alliance
- Eurodiaconia
- EuroHealthNet
- European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network
- Lifelong Learning Platform
- Make Mothers Matter
- PICUM – Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
- Red Cross EU Office
- Save the Children
- SOS Children’s Villages International

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