

EuroHealthNet – Response to the consultation on ‘Strengthening of the European Child Guarantee’

April 2026

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/17234-Strengthening-of-the-European-Child-Guarantee_en

EuroHealthNet welcomes the European Commission’s initiative to strengthen the European Child Guarantee (ECG). We support the ambition to accelerate progress in tackling child poverty and social exclusion and to improve access to essential services for children in need.

From EuroHealthNet’s perspective, the health dimension of the ECG would benefit from further strengthening. Children’s wellbeing is shaped not only by access to healthcare, but also by healthy nutrition, housing, education, physical activity, mental health support, and a healthy environment. The ECG already takes an important integrated approach, and its implementation needs to reflect these wider determinants of health and their role in shaping inequalities from an early age.

More attention is needed for health promotion, disease prevention, and primary healthcare. The ECG should play a stronger role in ensuring effective and free access to healthcare across the full continuum, from health promotion and disease prevention to treatment and care, while also strengthening primary healthcare as a key entry point for identifying unmet needs and addressing vulnerability in close coordination with social and educational services.

Children’s mental health and psychosocial wellbeing also need to be more strongly reflected in implementation and monitoring, particularly in light of growing needs across Europe. The ECG would benefit from a clearer focus on prevention, early intervention, and integrated responses in school and community settings, alongside better and more comparable data collection on children’s mental health.

The strengthened ECG also needs to respond strongly to the health-related drivers of inequality. Children in vulnerable situations are more likely to experience unhealthy food environments, obesity, physical inactivity, inadequate housing, pollution, and exposure to harmful products such as alcohol, tobacco, and nicotine products. Measures that promote healthy nutrition, physical activity, and healthier living environments, including healthy school meals, fruit and vegetable schemes, safe outdoor spaces, and accessible community sports infrastructure, deserve greater visibility in implementation.

Climate change and environmental pollution also need to be more clearly recognised as factors affecting children’s health and wellbeing. Children in disadvantaged situations are often disproportionately exposed to heat, pollution, and poor housing conditions, yet these risks remain insufficiently visible in current implementation efforts.

Finally, stronger implementation will depend on better monitoring and adequate funding. Monitoring needs to capture more clearly whether children in need are able to access quality services in practice, including through stronger indicators on unmet healthcare needs, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and inequalities between groups and territories, while avoiding unnecessary administrative burden. At the same time, sustained investment at European Union, national, regional, and local level remains essential.

EuroHealthNet therefore encourages the European Commission to strengthen the European Child Guarantee through a stronger focus on health promotion and prevention, primary healthcare, mental health, healthy nutrition, physical activity, healthier environments, improved monitoring, and adequate funding for implementation.

Further detail is set out in EuroHealthNet's attached policy brief on 'Strengthening the health dimension of the European Child Guarantee'.



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