

Promoting wellbeing at school: the European Perspective

From Awareness to Action: Making Every School a Health Promoting School

02 December 2025

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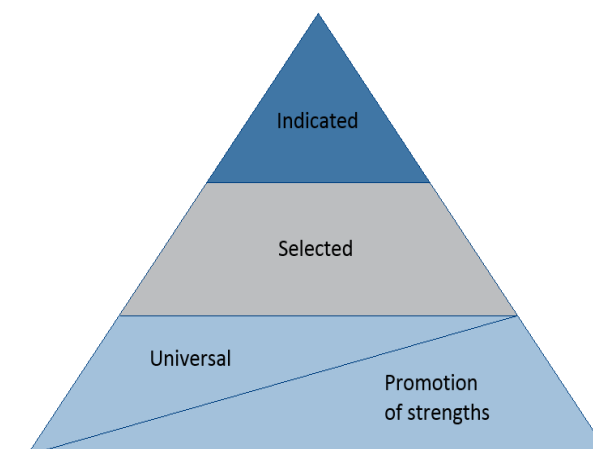
DG EAC unit « Schools and Multilingualism »

Current initiatives: Pathways to School Success

2022 adoption of Council Recommendation on **Pathways to School Success**, a new policy framework addressing at the same time **engagement, achievement and wellbeing**

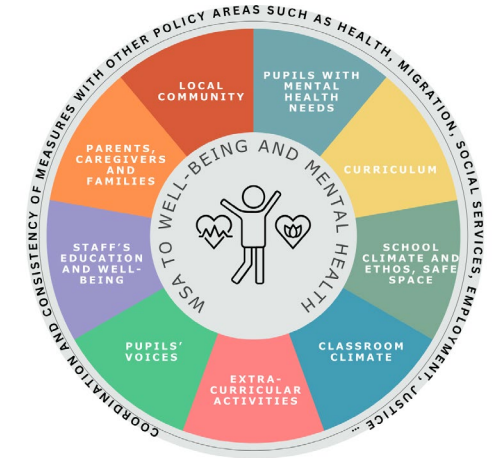
Implementation (2022-2025) through:

- ✓ **Peer learning and cooperation activities** in the remit of EEA WG on Schools
- ✓ **Guidance** for policymakers and schools on promoting wellbeing and mental health
- ✓ **Self-assessment tool** for inclusion and wellbeing hosted on European School Education Platform
- ✓ **Evidence-based research**
- ✓ **Erasmus+, eTwinning and European Innovative Teaching Award**



Guidelines on promoting wellbeing and mental health at school

- ✓ 2 sets of guidelines for policymakers and educators published in May 2024
- ✓ High focus on prevention, combining universal with targeted interventions, in a multi-disciplinary and cross sectoral approach
- ✓ Recommendations:
 1. Positive school climate, active participation and empowerment of learners
 2. Integration of social and emotional education into the curriculum
 3. Foster collaborative partnerships
 4. Fully integrate wellbeing principles into Initial Teacher Education
 5. Strengthen the capacity of school leaders to address wellbeing at school
 6. Safe schools to prevent and address any form of violence
 7. Promote wellbeing in the digital age
 8. Uphold fundamental rights by safeguarding core enablers of wellbeing
 9. Provide continuous professional development and support to educators
 10. Prioritise equity, inclusion and diversity
 11. Guarantee access to support services for learners with mental health needs



Guidelines on promoting wellbeing and mental health at school (continued)

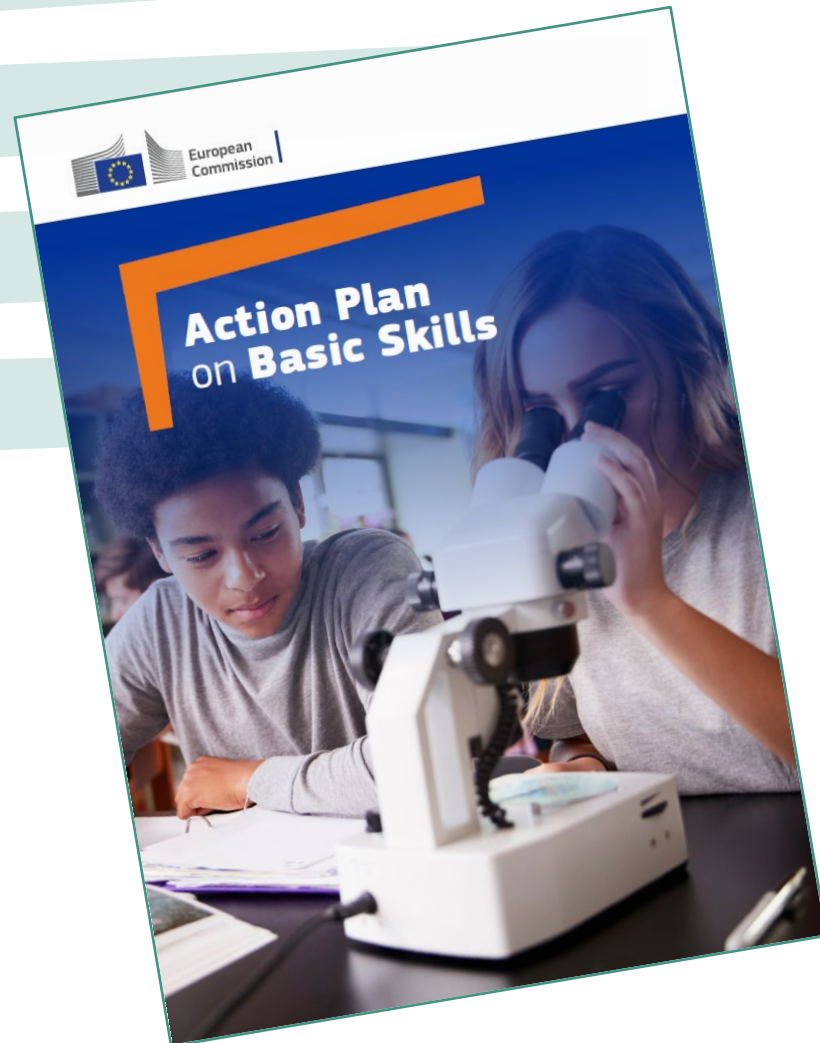
- ✓ Strengthen priority on wellbeing in Erasmus+ programme
- ✓ “Wellbeing at school” 2024 annual theme for eTwinning and European Innovative Teaching Award
- ✓ Launch of self-assessment tool for schools on inclusion and wellbeing – May 2025
- ✓ Child-friendly version of the wellbeing guidelines in cooperation with children from Eurochild Children Council and Learning for wellbeing foundation – November 2025



New initiatives: Action Plan on Basic Skills

Europe's competitiveness and social cohesion start with strong basic skills.

Basic skills form the foundation for individuals to become **independent, better informed and prepared, engaged and active citizens**, thus contributing to safeguard our democracy and fundamental values.



Action Plan on Basic Skills

- ✓ to improve basic **reading, mathematics, science, digital and citizenship skills** and
- ✓ to promote excellence, from early years through all stages of school education, and upskilling and reskilling among adults.



What are the main challenges? Drivers of basic skills decline



Socio-economic background

Socio-economic background is a major determinant of all five basic skills. For instance, disadvantaged learners are at a 6.1 times higher risk of combined underachievement in reading, mathematics and science when compared to their advantaged peers.



Teacher shortages

Acute teacher shortages have a negative impact on learning outcomes. The teaching workforce is ageing and fewer teachers enter the profession. There are issues with attractiveness, societal appreciation, working conditions and career prospects.



Parental involvement

Declining parental involvement poses a risk to student success. Supportive home environments, with caregivers engaged with the school and the teacher, go hand in hand with better performance.



Digital distractions

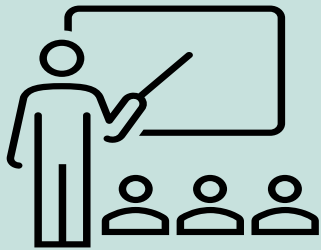
Digital distraction has a strong association with learning outcomes. Students who reported being distracted by other students using digital devices scored 15 points lower in PISA mathematics tests (the equivalent of three-quarters of a year's worth of education).

Main areas and flagship initiatives



BOOSTING BASIC SKILLS TEACHING AND LEARNING

Preparing for the Basic Skills Support Scheme and European School Alliances



SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda



ENABLING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

EU Literacy coalition



Tackling the basic skills crisis

Whole-of-government approach

The **Action Plan on Basic Skills** does not work in isolation.

- STEM Education Strategic Plan
- European Education Area 2026-2030
- European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan
- EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child
- European Child Guarantee
- EU Anti-Poverty Strategy
- ...



New initiatives: Action Plan against Cyberbullying

Why an Action Plan is needed?

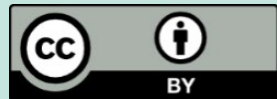
- ✓ Cyberbullying is a pervasive form of bullying online that harms children's wellbeing, mental health and relationships, that can lead to lasting consequences both at individual and societal level
- ✓ Strong correlation with school engagement and achievement

Purpose of the Action Plan:

- ✓ Complement existing EU initiatives
- ✓ Common EU definition of cyberbullying
- ✓ Enhance awareness and prevention, reporting mechanisms, and victim support
- ✓ Focus primarily on minors, with attention at groups at risk of vulnerabilities



Thank you



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European Child Guarantee

Schools4Health Conference
2 December 2025



Political Framework

Commission Recommendation: Investing in children to break the cycle of disadvantage (2013)

- General framework for policy development to promote the social inclusion and well-being of children, especially in vulnerable situations.

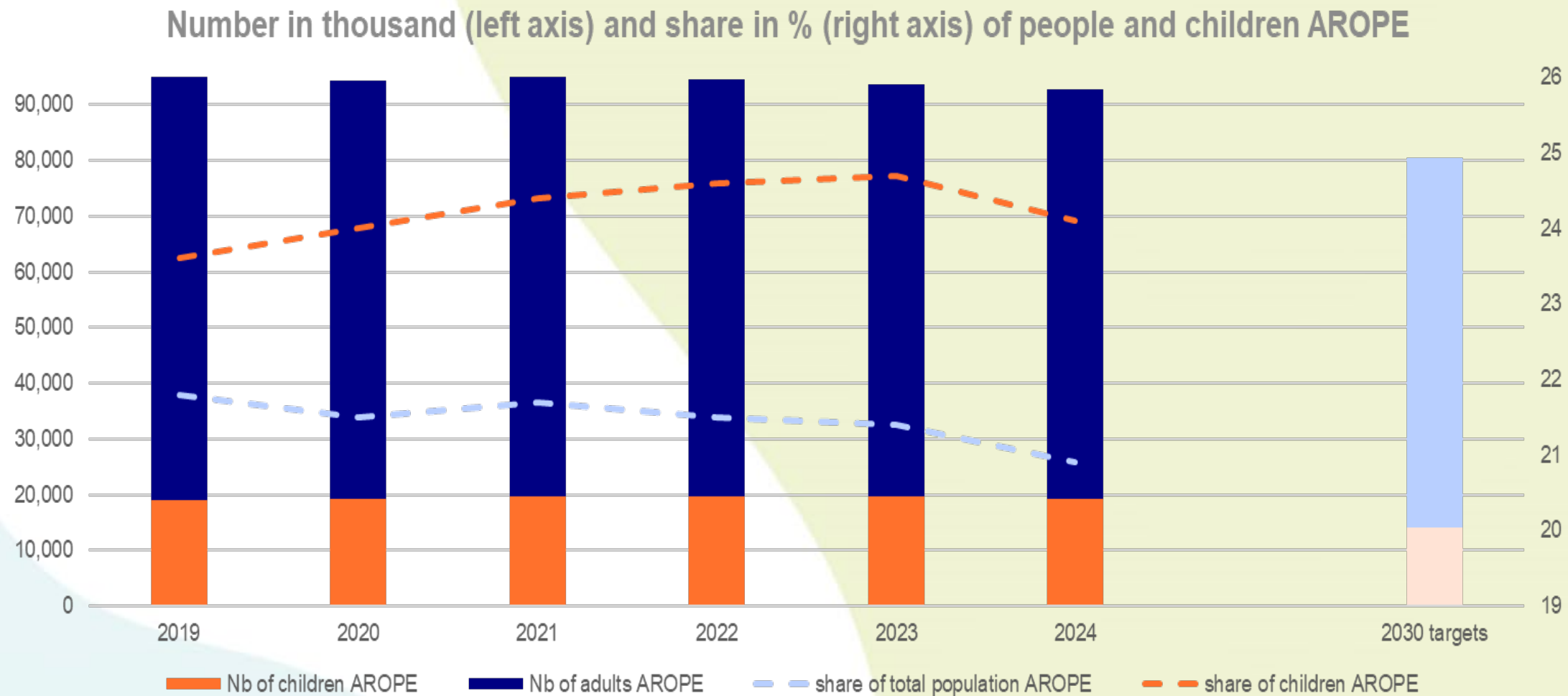
European Pillar of Social Rights (2017) and its Action Plan (2021)

- Poverty reduction targets – reducing by at least 15 million the number of people in poverty, including at least 5 million children
- The ECG, a deliverable of the Action Plan

EU Child Rights Strategy (2021)

- Presentation of a package of initiatives on the rights of the child in a coherent framework
- One of the themes of this package: socio-economic inclusion, health and education (linked to the ECG)

Despite the EU targets, the number of children in poverty slightly increased in 2024 compared to 2019



Source: Eurostat (ilc_PECS01), break in time series in 2020

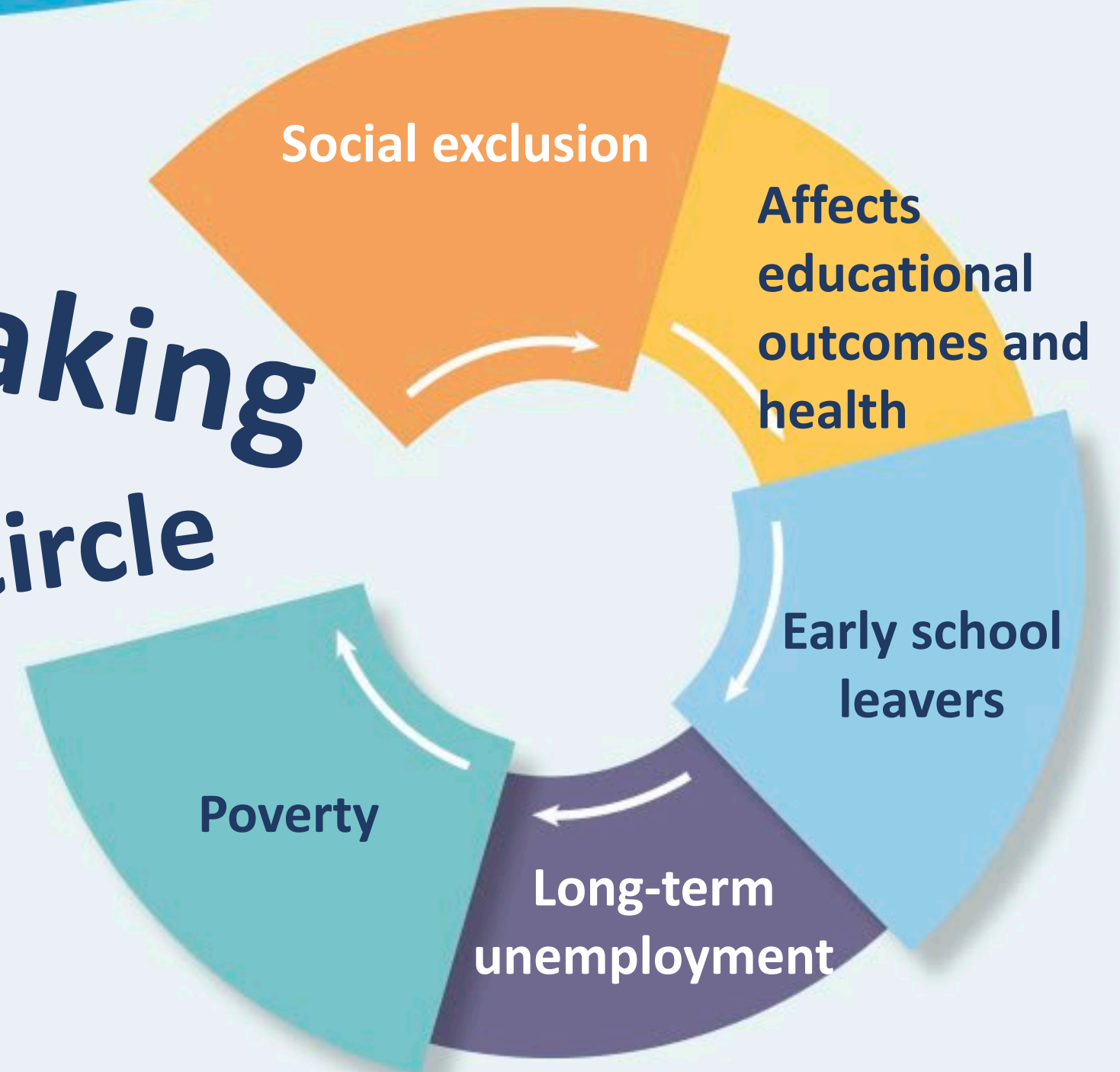
Definition of at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE): persons are AROPE when they are either at risk of poverty, or severely materially and socially deprived, or living in a household with a very low work intensity. Persons are included only once even if they are in more than one of the situations mentioned above. For more information about the definition, please see [here](#).



European Child Guarantee

Preventing and combating social exclusion by ensuring access for children in need to a set of essential services, while contributing to respect for the rights of the child by combating child poverty and promoting equal opportunities

Breaking The circle



Council Recommendation

L 223/14

FR

Journal officiel de l'Union européenne

22.6.2021

RECOMMANDATIONS

RECOMMANDATION (UE) 2021/1004 DU CONSEIL

du 14 juin 2021

établissant une garantie européenne pour l'enfance

LE CONSEIL DE L'UNION EUROPÉENNE,

vu le traité sur le fonctionnement de l'Union européenne, et notamment son article 292, en liaison avec l'article 153, paragraphe 2, et l'article 153, paragraphe 1, point j),

vu la proposition de la Commission européenne,

Commission
proposal adopted by
the members of the
Council (the Member
States)

Target group of the Recommendation: children in need

Children under 18 years of age who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion

The Recommendation calls on Member States to identify children in need and to take into account the specific disadvantages suffered by:

- a) homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation;
- b) children with disabilities;
- c) children with mental health issues;
- d) children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma;
- e) children in alternative, especially institutional, care;
- f) children in precarious family situations (e.g. living in a single household, with a disabled parent or in prison, etc.).

Services covered by the Guarantee

Member States are recommended to guarantee children in need:

... effective and free access to:



early childhood education and care



schooling and extracurricular activities



at least one healthy meal every school day



health care

... and effective access to:



healthy diet



adequate housing

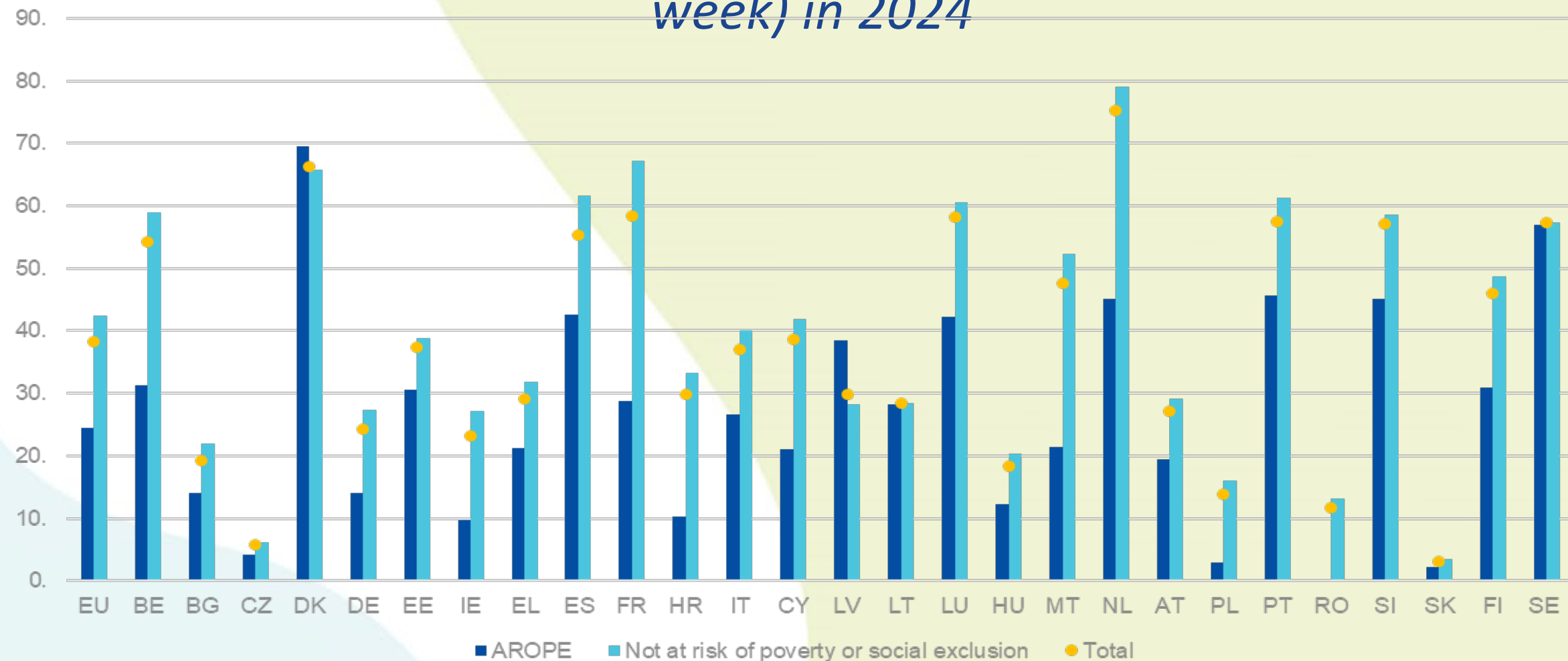
The key role of early childhood education and care (ECEC) and schools in the implementation of the Guarantee

Besides regular care, teaching and educational support to children in need, ECEC and schools can also play a key role in fostering their well-being with:

- Delivery of quality school meals, meeting nutritional standards
- Health enhancing physical activities
- Activities to improve health and food literacy
- Medical check-up
- + long term effect

Participation gaps in ECEC suggest that access barriers remain to be addressed

Share of children (< 3) (AROPE, non-AROPE, total) in ECEC (one hour or more per week) in 2024



Sources: Eurostat

Governance/tasks to be carried out by the Member States

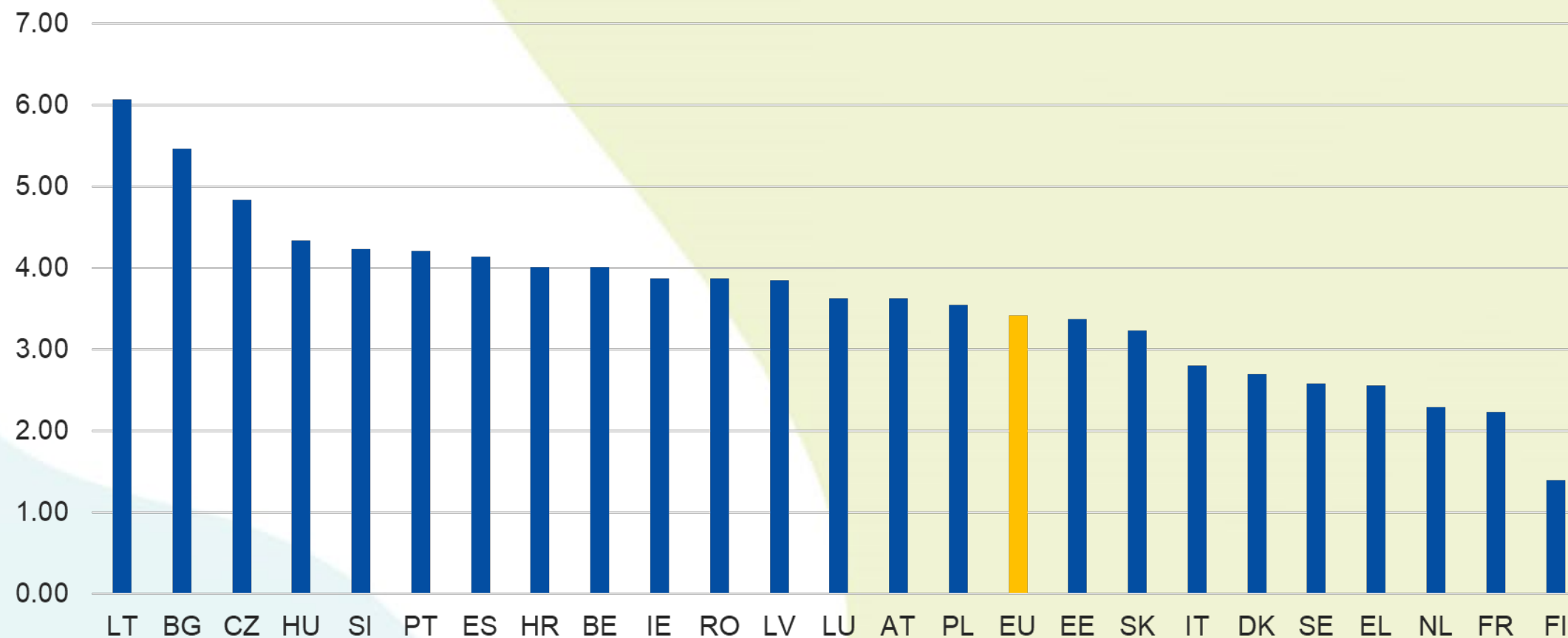
- **appoint a National Guarantee Coordinator;**
- **identify children in need** and the barriers they encounter in accessing services;
- **draft national action plans**, describing the corresponding objectives and measures (at national and local level) and monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the period up to 2030 – all the plans received;
- **involve relevant stakeholders** at national, regional and local level, including children, in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national action plans;
- **allocate sufficient resources** to combat child poverty and social exclusion;
- put in place effective information measures for children in need and their families, especially at regional and local level;
- **drafting and submitting a bi-annual report to the Commission on the implementation of the measures**

ESF +

- Under the 2021-2027 MFF, Member States must allocate at least **25 % of their ESF + resources to social inclusion.**
- At least **5 % of the ESF + allocation shall be allocated to measures to combat child poverty** in Member States where child poverty or social exclusion is above the EU average (BG, CY, EL, HU, IE, IT, LT, RO, ES, HR and LU); other Member States should allocate an appropriate amount.
- Member States may also invest in: (I) actions to address food or material deprivation; and (ii) accompanying measures for children under the corresponding ESF + specific objective.
- **Other available EU funds:** ERDF, InvestEU, Recovery and Resilience Facility, Technical Support Instrument.

Not reducing child poverty and its effects cost an average of 3.4 % of GDP in European countries each year

Estimated total monetary value of job, income and health loss for people aged 25-59 due to socio-economic disadvantage during childhood in 2019



Sources: OECD (2022) [The economic costs of childhood socio-economic disadvantage in European OECD countries](#)

Next steps: strengthening of the European Child Guarantee, including through investments and reforms, alongside the EU's first ever Anti-Poverty Strategy (Q2 2026), as announced in the Commission Work Programme

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[European Child Guarantee webpage](#) (including the national action plans):

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en>