

EU Alliance for Investing in Children

March 2020

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee for the wellbeing of all children across the EU

This is a historic turning point to ensure that child poverty is eliminated across the EU.

The EU Alliance for Investing in Children welcomes the prioritisation for a European Child Guarantee from the European Commission, European Parliament and interest from Council of the EU¹. Ahead of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council meeting on 19 March 2020 the EU Alliance is calling the EU institutions to:

a) Set an ambitious target to reduce child poverty and inequality across the EU.

The EU has committed to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The 1st SDG which is related to the eradication of poverty in all its forms, has a target to reduce at least by half the proportion of children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions by 2030. Although the EU is one of the wealthiest regions of the world, still approximately 19 million² children grow up at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The European Union should set an ambitious target to halve child poverty in the EU by 2030, as defined by the children (under 18) at risk of poverty or social exclusion composite indicator (**AROPE**). This target should guide EU Member States policy development and investments and the progress should be monitored against this EU target.

b) Reinforce the 2013 Recommendation on Investing in Children through a Council Recommendation on a Child Guarantee.³

Child poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that needs a comprehensive approach. Child poverty often depends on parents' socioeconomic and residence status⁴; it can occur due to parent's unemployment but also if parents /carers are trapped in low paid jobs/in-work poverty/low minimum income or lack access to basic services like housing and health as well as those that will support children reach their potential such as access to quality education and empowering children to participate in decision-making.

¹ For more please consult the background information at the end of this document.

² There are 23 million children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU 28, there are 19 million children without counting the United Kingdom.

³ <http://www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu/a-call-for-action-to-european-union-member-states-for-an-investing-in-children-council-recommendation/>

⁴ A migrant child and their parents' (risk of) poverty can be further exacerbated by their residence status, especially when the status is insecure, temporary, limits access to the labour market or when it's irregular.

Actions to reduce child poverty go hand in hand with other goals such as reduced inequalities, well-being, gender equality, access to quality and affordable services and more. Coordinated and well-aligned actions are required for their achievement.

The 2013 Recommendation on Investing in Children combined all these elements in a comprehensive policy framework which called EU Member States to develop multidimensional strategies based on 3 key pillars:

- 1) **Access to adequate resources and benefits.**
- 2) **Access to affordable, quality and inclusive services**
- 3) **Children's right to participate in cultural and recreational activities and in decisions made for their lives.**

For this reason, the EU Alliance for Investing in Children is calling the EU Institutions to ensure that the Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee is based on the comprehensive and 3 pillar approach of the 2013 European Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children⁵.

c) The Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee has a clear implementation plan which can be monitored

To ensure that the Child Guarantee is successful, its proper implementation and monitoring are key. EU Member States should develop country specific **Child Guarantee implementation plans** in which they will identify their priorities, set targets and present the actions that they will take to implement the Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee. Within the Child Guarantee implementation plans, EU Member States will identify the interconnection between different EU policies and funding and clarify how they will make full use of EU funding opportunities from the 2021-2027 EU Multiannual Financial Framework. These plans should feed into the national strategic policy framework on poverty reduction and social inclusion that EU Member States will be asked to develop as part of the enabling condition 4.3 (Common Provisions Regulation 2021-27). The Child Guarantee implementation plans should be monitored and feed into the European Semester process as well as to the monitoring of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the social scoreboard poverty indicator. In addition, the Child Guarantee implementation plans should be monitored against the SDGs and against priorities set in Annex D of the 2019 European Semester Country Reports.

d) The Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee is relevant to all children⁶ from 0-18 years of age and those growing up in most vulnerable situations in all countries of the EU.

According to Eurostat⁷ there are children growing up in poverty in all EU Member States, including countries with high GDP. The Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee should support all EU Member States in their efforts to reduce child poverty through strengthened welfare states, including social protection and minimum income systems and to ensure that fewer children grow up in poor families and poor living conditions. Through Child Guarantee implementation plans, EU Member States efforts to improve parents' access to quality jobs, with decent pay and to support families through adequate income support will be acknowledged. EU Member States will also

⁵ In line with the Child Guarantee Feasibility Study Phase I chapter 9.2, "Exploring possible options for the establishment of the Child Guarantee" [file:///C:/Users/Katerina/Downloads/FSCG%20-%20Intermediate%20Report%20\(FULL\)%20-%20FINAL%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Katerina/Downloads/FSCG%20-%20Intermediate%20Report%20(FULL)%20-%20FINAL%20(3).pdf)

⁶ The UNCRC defines the child as a person under 18 years of age <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

⁷ The at risk of poverty or social exclusion rate of population under 18 ranges from 13,1% -38,1% in the EU 27 (Source: Eurostat, 2018).

identify the policies/actions to support children's access to universal services that apply to all children (e.g. access to free education, ECEC, healthcare) and elaborate on strengthening additional targeted services applying to those most in need. It will also support EU Member States' response to children's access to decision making and cultural and recreational activities.

The Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee, therefore, should apply to **all children from the age of 0-18, whilst highlighting the need to support children in vulnerable situations**, such as children in migration, children with disabilities, children growing up in precarious family situations and children in institutional care as well as other groups of children identified by EU Member States in the Child Guarantee implementation plans.

e) The Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee is properly financed, and it interconnects different EU policies

The European Parliament has proposed the increase of the ESF+ by 5,9 billion EUR to support targeted actions aiming at implementing the European Child Guarantee, in order to contribute to children's equal access to free and good quality healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition. This is the equivalent of 5% of the ESF+. The EU Alliance for Investing in Children welcomes the European Parliament's proposal for a financial resource that will support the implementation of the Child Guarantee.

However, this should not be seen as the only financial resource that will implement the Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee.

This financial resource is mostly relevant to the 2nd pillar of the comprehensive policy framework i.e. access to affordable quality services, whereas the Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee should take a more ambitious and holistic approach when it comes to child poverty reduction.

A variety of EU funds (e.g. the ESF+, European Regional Development Fund, Asylum Migration Fund, InvestEU, Reform Support Programme) and national budgets should be able to support the implementation of the 3 pillars of the Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee.

The Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee should not be seen as the only policy proposal aimed at the elimination of child poverty across the EU, rather as the framework that will support EU Member States in these efforts. It will connect ambitions to other EU policies, for example, the announced Minimum Wage Initiative, the Work Life Balance Directive, the Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems, as well as the European Commission Communication on the protection of children in migration - which can all support the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee.

f) Ensure that the Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee is launched as a matter of urgency and to support strategic investments and policy development in EU Member States.

Time is of essence. Over the coming months the European Union will be negotiating the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the 2021-2027 EU funding period. At the same time, EU Member States are currently developing their **Operational Programmes (OPs)** which will

guide investments in the coming years. The Operational Programmes are expected to be finalised by the end of 2020 and enter into force on 1st January 2021.

EU Member States have already started developing their national strategies on poverty reduction and social inclusion ⁸ which will also include measures for the eradication of child poverty. It is essential that any financial resources directed towards the implementation of the Child Guarantee as part of the MFF 2021-27 are invested in line with a Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee. The Council Recommendation will guide Member States' investments to tackle child poverty in a sustainable, integrated and strategic way in line with the 3 pillar-approach.

Background information:

Following the conference closing the first phase of the preparatory action for a Child Guarantee, the EU Alliance for Investing in Children welcomes the European Commission's commitment to put forward a Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee.

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit said that the EU's social policies for tackling child poverty are in line with the UN Convention on the rights of the child - stipulating decisions to be taken in the best interests of the child; as well as with the idea of social investment and inclusion.

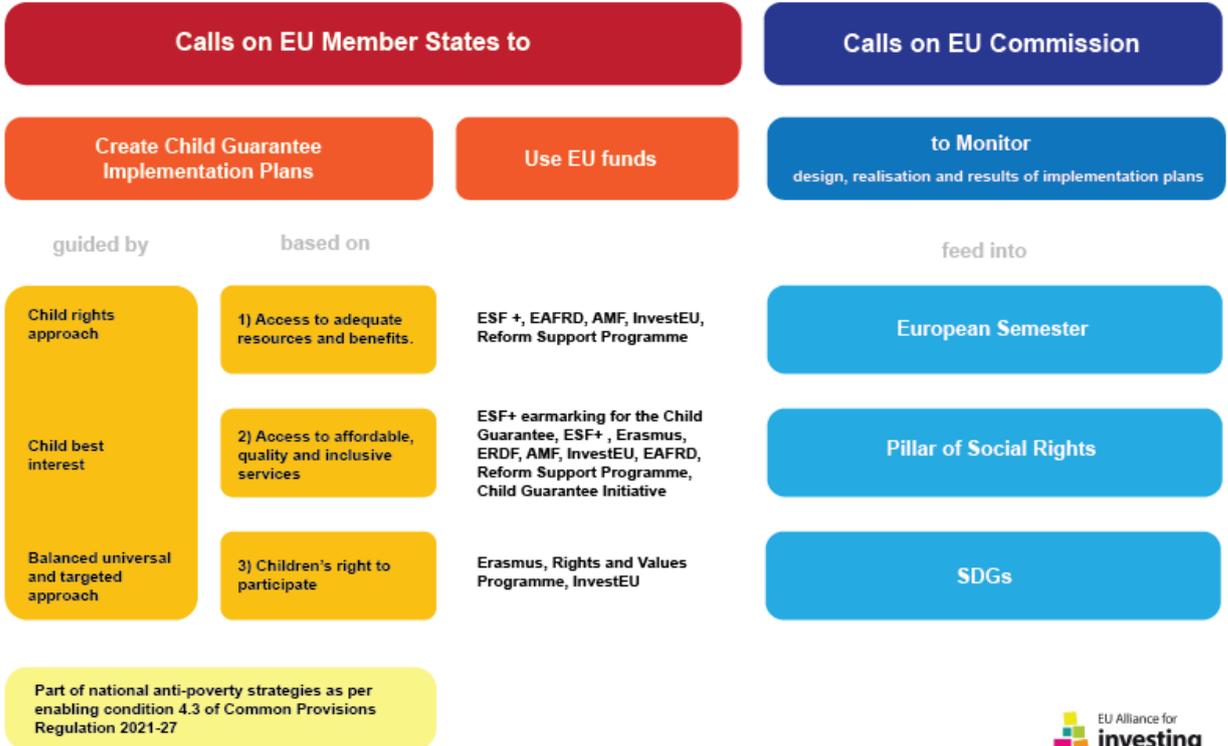
Joost Korte, Director General for DG Employment and Social Affairs confirmed furthermore that the European Commission is working on both the governance framework of the Child Guarantee in the form of a Council Recommendation and the funding component under the next MFF to support it.

The European Parliament is keeping to its mandate adopted in 2019 on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), requesting an increase of 5,9 billion to the fund, and that 5% of it is to be directed to targeted actions aiming at implementing the European Child Guarantee.

The current and incoming EU Presidencies showed their interest in the agenda at this conference and they are looking forward to concrete proposals from the European Commission.

⁸ In line with enabling condition 4.3 of proposed 2021-2027 Common Provisions Regulation

Key elements of the Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee



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 was endorsed by the following partner organisations of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children:

Alliance for Childhood European Network Group;
ATD Quart Monde;
Caritas Europa;
COFACE Families Europe;
Don Bosco International;
Dynamo International – Street Workers Network;
Eurochild;
Eurodiaconia;
EuroHealthNet;
European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities – EASPD;
European Anti-Poverty Network – EAPN;
European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless – FEANTSA;
European Public Health Alliance – EPHA;
European Social Network – ESN;
Lifelong Learning Platform
Mental Health Europe;
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM);
Roma Education Fund;
Save the Children;
SOS Children’s Villages International
UNICEF EU Office

Contacts

- Katerina Nanou, Katerina.nanou@savethechildren.org Senior Advocacy Advisor, Child Poverty and Children in Alternative Care, Save the Children, +32 (0)2 512 78 51
- Réka Tunyogi, reka.tunyogi@eurochild.org Head of Advocacy, Eurochild, +32 (0)2 211 05 54