

European Child Guarantee

On the last 14th of June, the **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)** has adopted the Commission proposal on establishing a **European Child Guarantee**.

This initiative implements Principle 11 of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, according to which

“Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality. Children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.”¹

The Child Guarantee also complements the **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**, which integrates all existing and future EU initiatives on children’s rights under one coherent policy framework.

The Strategy embraces six thematic areas:

1. child participation in the EU’s political and democratic life;
2. **socio-economic inclusion, education and health;**
3. prevention and protection from all forms of violence and discrimination;
4. child-friendly justice;
5. children in the digital age; and
6. the global dimension of the rights of the child.

¹ [The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles](#)

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The Child Guarantee represents the EU concrete action to deliver the objectives set out in the second thematic area of the Strategy on children socio-economic inclusion, aiming at **fighting child poverty, promoting inclusive and child-friendly societies, health and education systems.**²

Objective

The **objective** of the Child Guarantee is to **break the cycle of poverty and social exclusion across generations** by providing guidance and means for Member States to support **children in need**, i.e. persons under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Disadvantage and exclusion at an early age often play a **decisive role in children's future** compromising their ability to succeed later. Exclusion affects their health and performance at school, favours early leaving from education, reduces their chances to find a decent job, making it likely that they will face long-term unemployment. This creates that cycle of disadvantage that the Child Guarantee aims to end.

Background in figures

The Guarantee was adopted in light of the **vast number of children in the EU** who are currently living in households **at risk of poverty or social exclusion**.

In 2019, children in need were **22.2% of children in the EU**, amounting to nearly **18 million** children. Within minority groups, figures are significantly higher; for instance, around 60% of Roma children live in severe material deprivation and 80% are at risk of poverty or social exclusion³.

Disability is another factor able to hinder social inclusion of children. For instance, it is estimated that **19.9% of children with disabilities** leave early from education and training, compared to 9% of pupils without disabilities.

² [Socio-economic inclusion, health and education - Thematic area 2 of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.](#)

³ Figures from the [Factsheet on European Child Guarantee.](#)

Since 2019, the situation got dramatically worse due to the adverse socio-economic impacts of the current **COVID-19 crisis**. Pre-existing inequalities have been exacerbated and there is a significant risk of increased poverty or social exclusion rate. This is why the Council Recommendation adopting the Child Guarantee was very much needed.

Action: Access to Key Services

The initiative will prevent and fight **poverty** and **social exclusion** by guaranteeing access for children in need to a set of **key services**.

In particular, Member States must guarantee **free and effective access** for children in need to:

- **early childhood education and care**
- **education and school-based activities**
- **at least one healthy meal each school day**
- **healthcare**

Member States also must guarantee **effective access** to:

- **healthy nutrition**
- **adequate housing**

Specific Needs and Children with Disabilities

The Guarantee also requires that Member States take into account the **specific needs** of children from **disadvantaged backgrounds**, such as those experiencing homelessness, **disabilities**, children with precarious family situations, migrant, minority racial or ethnic backgrounds or those in alternative care.

Regarding more specifically **children with disabilities**, the Child Guarantee requires that:

- Member States end **segregation** and **discrimination** in accessing mainstream education;
- Member States adapt **facilities** and **educational materials** of early childhood education and care and **educational establishments** to the needs of children with

disabilities, using inclusive teaching and learning methods; for this purpose Member States must ensure that qualified teachers and other educational professionals are available, such as psychologists, speech therapists, rehabilitators or teaching assistants;

- School systems provide **learning support** to **children with learning difficulties** to compensate for their linguistic, cognitive and educational gaps;
- Healthcare systems provide targeted **rehabilitation and habilitation services** for children with disabilities;
- State Members prevent children from being placed into institutional care; ensure the transition of children **from institutional care to quality community-based or family-based care** and **support their independent living** and **social integration**.⁴

EU Funds, Monitoring and Implementation

Member States most affected must spend 5% of their allocated funds under the **European Social Fund Plus** (ESF+) on fighting child poverty and social exclusion. States can also make use of **Next Generation EU**, the **European Regional Development Fund**, **InvestEU** and the **Recovery and Resilience Facility** to fund measures tackling child poverty and social exclusion.

Member States are required to establish **National Child Guarantee Coordinators**, set up **National Action Plans**, and **report every two years to the Commission** on the progress in implementing the Guarantee.

⁴ [European Child Guarantee](#)