

European Parliament – EU Alliance for Investing in Children manifesto on child poverty in the EU.

Across the EU, approximately 1 in 4 children grow up at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The EU has already taken important steps towards ending child poverty, notably through the recently published European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the European Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing the Child Guarantee.

The European Parliament in collaboration with the EU Alliance for Investing in Children **calls on the Council of the EU and its Member States to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, to adopt the Child Guarantee as a matter of priority and ensure that the Child Guarantee starts being implemented 6 months from the adoption of the Recommendation.**

It calls on EU Member States to:

- Set ambitious national targets to halve child poverty by 2030 and make sure that all children are counted.

For the first time in the EU's history, the European Commission¹ has set an EU poverty target aiming to lift at least 5 million children out of poverty by 2030.

Although a significant step towards child poverty reduction, this target is not aligned with the UN poverty reduction target that aims to end extreme poverty and half poverty in all its forms by 2030.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, 18 million children were growing up in poverty and social exclusion. Considering that this figure will further increase due to the disastrous socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, EU Member States should aim to ensure that at least 9 million children are lifted out of poverty by 2030. This can be achieved by setting ambitious national targets and sub-targets on child poverty reduction.

- Develop comprehensive Child Guarantee Action Plans that will be often reviewed.

The proposed Child Guarantee Action Plans will turn the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation into an implementable framework that could be monitored and feed into the European Semester as well as in the monitoring of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the proposed European Anti-Poverty Strategy.

In these Action Plans, EU Member States should provide a comprehensive overview of the measures that they will take to tackle child and family poverty and break the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage. The Action Plans should also outline the groups of children to be prioritised in their responses as well as the national targets and sub-targets related to child poverty reduction and social inclusion. A transparent indication of the use of EU and national budgets should be also included along with timeline of activities.

Child Guarantee Action Plans must be reviewed 5 years after the adoption of the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation, depending on the process of the implementation and new challenges ahead.

¹ As indicated in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

- Ensure meaningful participation of children and parents in decision making, as well as of relevant stakeholders, including local communities and organizations.

A prerequisite for democratic societies is the participation of its citizens and especially the population in question for each policy. EU Member States should ensure the meaningful participation of children and their parents as well as of relevant stakeholders such as regional, local authorities, civil society, non-governmental organisations, educational establishments and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion and integration, children's rights, inclusive education and non-discrimination² in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation.

To ensure meaningful and child rights participation, EU Member States must put in place mechanisms that promote children's participation in decision-making that affects their lives and in particular in relation to the fulfilment of the Child Guarantee.

- Ensure that the Child Guarantee properly feeds into the European Semester process and the country-specific recommendations

An efficient monitoring and evaluation system will be essential to ensure the Child Guarantee is an implementable instrument that triggers concrete reforms within the national and local frameworks.

For this reason, EU member states should ensure that the Child Guarantee implementation is monitored by the well-established policy coordination framework of the European Semester and the revised Social Scoreboard. Regarding the latter, the European Commission and the Social Protection committee should ensure that the indicators are disaggregated and take into account the target groups of children in need identified by the Child Guarantee. In addition, all relevant indicators should be disaggregated to better align with the areas identified by the European Commission's proposal.

- Ensure a more comprehensive approach on the services provided under the Child Guarantee in the areas of nutrition and leisure activities

The services provided via the school system will play a pivotal role in ensuring children with more sustainable and healthy nutrition and providing sports, leisure and cultural activities. Yet, it is essential to consider that children in need often face severe barriers in having access to schools, while other children are receiving different kinds of education outside of the national school system. Moreover, some Member States do not have the capacity or the necessary infrastructures to ensure these services via the school system. Finally, considering how many families are experiencing food poverty daily, it is fundamental to provide such services when schools are closed.

Member States should thus include in the Child Guarantee Recommendation children's adequate access to sports, leisure and cultural activities organised outside of the school system and school curricula. Moreover, the Recommendation should also emphasise the necessity to support access to healthy meals outside of the school system and empower parents to provide nutritious meals for their children, including through in-kind or financial support.

- Ensure coherence and complementarity between the Child Guarantee and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child

² As proposed in the EC proposal on a Council Recommendation establishing the Child Guarantee

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child represents a significant step forward protecting children's rights and well-being within the EU. The document includes the dominant threats and challenges that children face today, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, violence, poverty and social exclusion, physical and mental health issues. It includes crucial measures and recommendations to tackle these issues through key actions planned by the European Union and its Member States.

Member States should ensure coherence and complementarity between the robust and comprehensive framework offered by the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the structure of the Child Guarantee. For example, the Child Guarantee could strengthen its child participation section by establishing, improving and providing adequate resources for new and existing child participation mechanisms at local, regional and national level.