



EU Child Guarantee (roadmap)

Policy brief

August 2020

1. What is the state of play?

Fighting child poverty has become a top priority on the EU agenda. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced in her political priorities for 2019-2024 the plan to create an EU Child Guarantee, picking up on the idea proposed by the European Parliament. This plan was confirmed in early 2020 in the Commission's [Communication on A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions](#).

In August 2020, the European Commission published the roadmap for an EU Child Guarantee. The roadmap presents the intended purpose and scope of such an EU framework. It invites for feedback from citizens and stakeholders **until 7 October** at this [link](#).

The feedback will inform the European Commission's preparation of the formal proposal for the EU Child Guarantee, which is expected to be released in the first quarter of 2021.

2. What has been done so far at EU level to tackle child poverty?

The EU has developed in the past several policy instruments to combat poverty and social exclusion for children, notably:

- the [2013 Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children](#). This is a common EU framework to tackle child poverty that focuses on 3 dimensions: providing parents with adequate income, ensuring access to quality services, and upholding children's rights to participate in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities as well as in decision-making that affects their lives.
- the [2019 Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems](#). This calls on EU member states to improve access to affordable quality early childhood education and care systems.

While the latter is still recent and not yet implemented, the 2013 Commission Recommendation was evaluated and found that its implementation has not proven enough progress and there is much room for improvement to step up efforts to reduce child poverty. This is one of the reasons justifying the need for a new and stronger EU initiative in the field.

Child poverty is covered under principle 11 of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) that states: *“children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality”* and *“children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities”*.

3. What is an EU Child Guarantee?

The Child Guarantee will serve as a policy framework at EU level to recommend to member states to ensure the affordability, accessibility and availability of inclusive quality services for children in need. The initiative will consist of a Council Recommendation asking member states to make the necessary policy and funding investments, so that children in need have access to the essential services required for their well-being, health and personal development. The Child Guarantee therefore puts the focus on implementation in and by the Member States, which have to realise this “guarantee”, with the support of the EU.

4. What is it expected to achieve?

The objective of the EU Child Guarantee is to ensure access for **children in need to essential services**:

- ✓ early childhood education and care (ECEC),
- ✓ health care,
- ✓ education,
- ✓ nutrition,
- ✓ housing a
- ✓ participation in cultural and leisure activities.

The goal of the Child Guarantee is to break the cycle of poverty faced by many children and contribute to building resilient societies across the EU. The initiative is expected to reduce the gap between children in need and their better-off peers in terms of access to essential services and contribute to equal opportunities for children in the EU.

5. How will it work?

To implement the Child Guarantee initiative, the member states would adopt **multi-annual national strategies, covering at least the period until 2030**, where they would foresee that efforts are made to reach out to, and improve access to services for children in need. They would also explain how to ensure free or affordable access to the core/basic elements of the services, where the main focus would be on existing gaps in the provision of services for children in need. These strategies may form part of broader ones, in areas such as poverty and children’s rights.

To implement their strategy for children in need, the member states would adopt **Child Guarantee National Action Plans**. In these Action Plans, the member states would identify the children in need concerned by the Child Guarantee Recommendation, their needs, measures for addressing their needs and the financial investment needed, via national and – where available – complementary and targeted EU funding as well as monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

This approach will allow for adjusted and tailor-made solutions according to specific situations faced by children in need in each member state. The precise actions and priority target sub-groups would be left to the member states to define, based on their specificities, gaps, mode of service delivery to them and the financing required.

6. Which financial (and other) support will be available?

The EU funds would play a role, including the European Social Fund plus (ESF+), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Asylum Migration Fund (AMF), Erasmus plus, InvestEU, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and funding available in the field of healthcare. The European Commission in its proposals for the ESF+, has called on every EU member state invest 5% of ESF+ resources under shared management to implement measures reducing child poverty. Given the on-going negotiations, there are still concerns about the amount of funding and earmarking (if any) will apply to child poverty measures to support the implementation of Child Guarantee.

The Commission will help build the capacity of national or local authorities in the member states. This could be done by training, peer review, mentoring, sharing best practices etc., to facilitate with the choice of policy instruments and application of good practices.

7. What is 'new' compared to previous EU initiatives?

The Child Guarantee is a targeted EU instrument for **children in need**. Then, another key feature is the focus on **services** in terms of guaranteeing the affordability, accessibility and availability of services that are inclusive and of high quality for children in need. The Child Guarantee initiative will contribute to the **implementation of Pillar principle 11** and will form part of the **Action Plan for the implementation of the Pillar**. It will complement other initiatives, such as the upcoming strategies on the rights of the child and on disability. It would **complement and strengthen the 2013 Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children**, with regard to access to affordable quality services and participation in culture and leisure activities. The 2013 Recommendation would remain as a framework for all children, while the Child Guarantee would be a targeted instrument for children in need.

8. What is in it for cities?

The Child Guarantee opens new opportunities for cities given its focus on services for children in need. It can enable cities to:

- **Cover gaps in service provision** to children in need by adding new services or improving existing ones to make them more accessible and affordable (or free of charge) or extending the services to more areas in the city (e.g. deprived areas also)
- **Get EU funding support** to pilot new (integrated) approaches to fighting child poverty at local level and/or **tailor support to meet the specific needs** of sub-groups of disadvantaged children by setting out specific measures or services
- **Get recognition** of the key role cities play in fighting child poverty and, in doing so, fostering equal opportunities, social inclusion and social cohesion at local level
- **Improve coordination of efforts at local level** by using a common understanding and shared goals on what to do more and how to improve the lives of children
- **Better cooperation with the national government** to develop and implement Child Guarantee National Action Plans to set out the groups of children in need, the support measures to address their needs and the services to improve
- **Enhanced collaboration with other cities at European level** to learn from one another and exchange good practices on what works well (and what doesn't) in preventing and fighting child poverty based on this common EU framework

9. How can cities get involved in the EU Child Guarantee?

What can your city do?

1. Have a say on the roadmap to the EU Child Guarantee

Your city is welcome to send your feedback to the roadmap of the EU Child Guarantee. You can send your city feedback **until 7 October** at this [link](#). In your feedback you can highlight your current challenges to tackle child poverty, the gaps you face in service provision to all children in need and the funding gaps as well, and put forward your proposals for better support from the EU to cities in terms of policies, laws and funding. The more cities raise common messages the stronger and louder voice we get in this consultation and better chances that our proposals will be taken into consideration for the Child Guarantee proposal.

2. Get involved on National action plans

Contact your relevant ministry in the national government to kick-off a dialogue about the National Child Guarantee Action Plans. You can offer your city's support and ideas for the planning and elaboration of this national action plan, which would be normally welcomed given the short timeframe for the national ministries to come up with these action plans that are a necessary instrument to be able to access the EU funding attached to it. You should try to have a say from your city to influence the setting of the priority target groups of children in need and the services to focus on, to reflect your needs from local level.

3. Get in touch with your ESF+ managing authority

Contact your ESF managing authority to kick-off a dialogue about the next ESF+ programming and what resources could and would be allocated to child poverty measures and improving support services for children in need. Keep in mind that there is additional EU funding for 2021-2022 to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis; this is a real opportunity for your city to access this additional funding if you can propose concrete projects that can improve the situation of children and their families affected by the crisis. You can find a template for email or letter to send to your ESF managing authority in the Annex of our policy brief on ESF+.

What is Eurocities doing?

1. Formulating a position paper with key recommendations from cities

Eurocities will use the inputs collected from cities through our child poverty survey to formulate a position paper with policy proposals and recommendations from cities to feed into the EU Child Guarantee. We will send this position paper to the European Commission as feedback to the EU Child Guarantee roadmap by 7 October. We are already in contact with the European Commission policy officers drafting the EU Child Guarantee. We will share with them the findings from our survey on child poverty, showcasing the key challenges in cities, the barriers and the gaps, as well as the good practices and innovative approaches cities are already using, which can inspiring policy change at national and EU level.

2. Advocating for a strong European Social Fund+ for 2021-2027

Eurocities is carrying out intense advocacy and lobbying to get a better access for cities to the European Social Fund in the next programming period 2021-2027, including to the allocated resources for child poverty measures. Read more in our [policy brief on ESF+](#).

3. Raising awareness of the commitment from cities to improve support to children

Eurocities is running a political campaign ‘**Inclusive Cities for all: Social Rights in My City**’ to engage city mayors and deputy mayors to pledge on actions to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights at local level. So far, we collected 42 pledges from over 35 cities in Europe. Some of the city pledges are directed at improving childcare and support to children through concrete investments in making municipal services for children more accessible, available and affordable according to principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The cities who already committed at political level to step up their efforts for improving services for children are Leeds, Lyon, Hamburg, Warsaw, Madrid, Timisoara, Vienna, Bilbao and Istanbul. All city pledges are available at www.inclusivecities4all.eu The campaign is still open for more cities to join.

10. Useful resources

- Have your say on the roadmap to an EU Child Guarantee: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12565-European-Child-Guarantee>
- Commission [Communication A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions](#)
- [2013 Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children](#)
- [2019 Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems](#)
- [The Feasibility Study of the first phase of the Preparatory Action for a Child Guarantee](#)
- [European Pillar of Social Rights](#)
- [Eurocities policy brief on ESF+](#)



This policy brief has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>