

Access to key services for children in need: Council agrees European Child Guarantee



The Council today adopted a recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee. The aim of the recommendation is to prevent and combat social exclusion of children in need by guaranteeing access to a set of key services, thereby also helping to uphold the rights of the child by combating child poverty and fostering equal opportunities.

In particular, it is recommended that member states guarantee effective and free access to early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, at least one healthy meal each school day and healthcare, as well as effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing.

Our children are our future. The European Pillar of Social Rights action plan has set an ambitious target of reducing by five million by 2030 the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and this was reinforced at the Porto Social Summit. The European Child Guarantee is a major step forward towards this goal. We need concerted action to make sure we tackle disadvantage and exclusion during our children's early years, to guarantee a brighter future for their adult life.

Ana Mendes Godinho, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal

Nearly 18 million children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU and the COVID-19 crisis is expected to exacerbate existing inequalities.

The recommendation sets out a number of proposed measures for member states, such as:

- building a policy framework to address social exclusion of children
- identifying and addressing financial and non-financial barriers to participation in early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities
- providing at least one healthy meal each school day
- ensuring provision of educational materials, including digital educational tools, books, uniforms and any required clothing
- providing transport to early childhood education and care and education establishments
- ensuring equal and inclusive access to school-based activities, including participation in school trips and sport, leisure and cultural activities
- implementing accessible health promotion and disease prevention

- programmes targeting children in need and their families
- providing for priority and timely access to social housing or housing assistance for children in need and their families

Background and next steps

The European Child Guarantee is the first EU-level policy instrument which aims to address disadvantage and exclusion in childhood, which often lead to disadvantage in adult life. The Child Guarantee puts into practice Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, on childcare and support for children. The Pillar is the EU's strategy to build a fair and inclusive social Europe.

The recommendation stipulates that member states should nominate a national Child Guarantee coordinator to coordinate and submit to the Commission, within nine months of the adoption of the recommendation, an action plan covering the period until 2030. Member states should report to the Commission on the progress in implementing this recommendation every two years.

The European Commission is tasked with reviewing the progress made and reporting to the Council five years after the adoption of the regulation.

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