

Children's Rights Alliance

EU Child Guarantee Webinar

Overview of Child Guarantee and Current State of Play in Europe - work in progress

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The Ambition

“every child in Europe at risk of poverty (including refugee children) has access to free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition.”

- European Parliament

Origins and Context

- **November 2015 - European Parliament resolution calls for establishment of CG**
 - on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty**WHY?**
 - Weak implementation of 2013 Recommendation *Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage* & limited use of EU Funds to support implementation
 - Persistent high levels of child poverty and social exclusion
- **2017 Budget - Preparatory action agreed between Commission and Parliament**
 - Child Guarantee Scheme / Establishing a European Child Guarantee and financial support
 - 3 phases: 1. feasibility study; 2. study on economic implementing framework; 3. pilot projects
- **November 2017 - European Pillar of Social Rights – principle 11**
 - Proclaimed by European Parliament, the Council and the Commission
 - *Children have right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.*
- **2018 Negotiations over next round of EU Funds (MFF 2021-2027)**
 - December 2018: European Parliament proposes allocating €5.9 billion of European Social Fund Plus+ to Child Guarantee
- **2019 Incoming European Commission**
 - from scepticism to commitment
 - ***“To support every child in need, I will create the European Child Guarantee, picking up on the idea proposed by the European Parliament”*** (COM President, Ursula von der Leyen)
 - responsibility for its development to the Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit
 - overall coordinating role to Vice-President-designate for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica.

Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee

Phase 1: 2018-2020

- **4 Target Groups**

- children residing in institutions; children with disabilities; children with a migrant background [including refugee children]; children living in a precarious family situation

- **Outputs**

- Inception Report
- 28 country reports
- 5 Policy Papers
 - free healthcare; free education; free early childhood education and care [ECEC]; decent housing and adequate nutrition
- 4 Target Group Discussion Papers
- On-line consultation with key stakeholders
- 8 Case Studies
 - highlighting lessons from international funding programmes
- 4 consultations with children (focus groups)
- 4 fact-finding workshops
 - September and October 2019 (one on each TG)
- Intermediate Report
- Final Conference (17 February 2020)
- Final Report (June 2020 – 286 pages)
 - Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en>

FSCG1 – Main Findings 1-5

- Access by children in vulnerable situations to the five PAs under scrutiny needs to be improved
- Failure to ensure access to the five policy areas has short & long term negative consequences for children & society
- Lack of access to the five policy areas represents a failure to uphold children's rights
- It is feasible to guarantee access to the five PAs
- Efforts to ensure access to the five PAs should focus on all children in vulnerable situations

FSCG1 – Main Findings 6-10

- Children who are most disadvantaged need more support to access 5 PAs: a twin-track approach is key to increasing access & inclusivity
- Ensuring access to 5 PAs on its own is not sufficient: mainstream services also need to be inclusive & of high quality so as to ensure that children in vulnerable situations benefit fully & avoid stigma and segregation
- Ensuring access to the five PAs is necessary but not sufficient to tackle child poverty & social exclusion
- Ensuring access to the five PAs requires a comprehensive approach at Member State level
- Primary responsibility for ensuring access to the five PAs rests with Member States, but EU action to support them (i.e. policy coordination & guidance + financial support) is feasible & has clear legal basis

FSCG1 – Main Findings 11-15

- Existing efforts by the EU to support and encourage Member States to ensure access by children in vulnerable situations are helpful, but a new EU initiative could bring real added value & a more effective use of EU instruments
- EU funds have considerable potential to play a more effective and strategic role in supporting access to the five PAs
- EU political leadership will be important in encouraging Member States to ensure access to the five PAs
- Mainstreaming support for the implementation of a possible new initiative across the European Commission & ensuring its full use of the instruments available is essential
- Considerable popular & political demand for a CG

4 (of 9) key issues to be teased out

- How to **ensure impact** of CG & Member States' accountability for delivery?
 - develop in parallel:
 - i) a comprehensive strategic thinking focusing on the general policy outcomes to be achieved by the CG
 - ii) understandable and tangible policy levers (i.e. (sub)national policies/ programmes/ projects) to achieve the desired policy outcomes and create accountability of Member States in each specific component of the CG
- **Which children** should be covered?
 - all children, specific target groups, children at risk of poverty, children in low income families, children in need?
- How to ensure focussing on access to 5/6 policy areas links to development of overall national strategies on **child poverty**?
- How to increase scale/use/impact of **EU Funds**?
 - How to ensure strategic impact/leverage on MS policies?

FSCG2

Study on the economic implementing framework of a possible EU child guarantee scheme including its financial foundation

- explore the **cost & benefits** for the competent authorities to guarantee in practice that all children at risk of poverty in EU have access to the 5 social rights
- provide a thorough **economic and financial** analysis of the design, feasibility, governance and implementation options of a possible future CG scheme in all EU Member States
- Identify **understandable and tangible policy levers** (i.e. (sub)national policies/ programmes/ projects) to achieve the desired policy outcomes and create accountability of Member States in each specific component of the CG
- Focus on **children at risk of poverty**

FSCG2

- **Components to be examined & actions to be assessed in depth**
 - each child at risk of poverty should receive at least **one healthy balanced full meal per day**
 - provision of free/subsidised school full meals for children in low-income households
 - each child at risk of poverty should have **access to free ECEC services**
 - provision of free ECEC for children in low-income households
 - there should be **no homeless children**
 - provision of services aiming at preventing and fighting child homelessness of children & their families
 - there should be **no school costs** for children at risk of poverty attending compulsory school
 - removal of school costs for children in low-income households attending compulsory school
 - each child at risk of poverty should be provided with **free regular health examinations and follow-up treatment** at their successive growth stages
 - organisation of free post-natal health examination at birth; home visits or other forms of regular examinations organised during the first years of life and then regular health monitoring (general health, dental care, vision and hearing screening and vaccination) in school or in other settings
 - provision of integrated services, such as organisation of an extended/ whole-day school (or networked provision of key services in day care or other settings)

FSCG2 - Process

- **Detailed mapping of 5 components (July-Aug. 2020)**
 - Country reports assessing strengths/weaknesses of existing (sub)national policies/programmes
 - Selection of promising policies/programmes for detailed assessment
- **In-depth assessment of selected priority actions (Sept.-Dec. 2020)**
 - analyse **the financial cost and expected benefits** of the action;
 - investigate at **which level** (national, subnational), **under which conditions** (universal or criteria-based) and through **which mechanisms** the action could best be operated;
 - investigate at which level (EU, national, subnational) the required **financial resources** could be found to finance the action;
 - make recommendations on how **EU funding** could be used to complement and influence (sub)national funding, and propose clear, transparent and measurable criteria that can be used to assign the ESIF or other EU funding to the action;
 - make recommendations on adequate **governance mechanisms**, in particular monitoring and evaluation, to ensure effective management of the action and the availability of evidence for continuous policy learning and further improvement of the CG
- **Intermediate report (mid February 2021 – interim report end Nov.2020)**
 - Present outcomes of mapping
 - Proposal for a practical definition of EU CG concept
 - Present outcomes of in-depth assessment
 - Make some recommendations on the conditions of provision, the adequate governance mechanisms, the cost of different options (where relevant and possible), possible funding sources, effective funding arrangements, and measurable criteria to monitor progress
- **Closing conference (late April 2021)**
 - 200 participants
 - Present & discuss results
 - Build common understanding & ownership among stakeholders
- **Final report (end May 2021)**

Commission Roadmap & Consultation

- 19 August 2020 Commission issues Roadmap & invites feedback by 07 October
- **Some key elements**
 - Proposing a Council Recommendation in 2021
 - Adds Culture & Leisure activities to EP's 5 policy areas
 - Focus is on children in need
 - Makes link to consequences of Covid-19
 - MS to adopt Multi-annual National Strategies up to 2030 implemented through Child Guarantee National Action Plans
 - Focus is on implementation

Commission Roadmap & Consultation

– COM role:

- Help build capacity in MS (training, peer review, mentoring, sharing best practices)
- Provide policy coordination across stakeholders, governance levels & policies – monitor outcomes of implementation in MS
- Provide strategic guidance on strengthened or more targeted use of ESIF funds

– Consultation of citizens & stakeholders

- collect relevant information on the challenges encountered by national/local administrations, service providers, children, and civil society
- identify the main gaps that could be addressed at European Union level and to identify areas where the Union can have added value

Some opportunities for Ireland

- **Increase political focus** on child poverty – esp. access to services
 - Put children at heart of post Covid-19 responses
 - Increased accountability for outcomes
 - regular reporting and EU “guidance”
- **Enhance strategic approach**
 - review existing priorities & detail specific actions in light of 6 PAs
 - enhance policy coordination
- **Increase proportion of EU Funding** allocated to child poverty
- **Enhance exchange & learning** with other MS
- **Reinforce voice of civil society** organisations