

THE EUROPEAN CHILD GUARANTEE

PHASE III OF THE PREPARATORY ACTION:
“TESTING THE EU CHILD GUARANTEE IN THE EU MEMBER STATES”



Funded by
the European Union

Phase III of European Child Guarantee: The Fundamentals

More than one out of every five¹ children in the EU was at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Europe before the COVID-19. Now, an already serious problem, is being further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Poverty and deprivation in childhood can mark children for the rest of their lives and lead to intergenerational cycles of disadvantage for children. In Europe countries are struggling to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged children, particularly: children with disabilities, children in precarious family situations, children residing in institutions, children with a minority racial or ethnic background (particularly Roma), children experiencing severe housing deprivation and children with a migrant background.

The ‘**European Child Guarantee**,’ is the initiative of the European Commission which aims to ensure that children in need and facing disadvantages in the European Union have access to healthcare, education, early childhood education and care, adequate housing and healthy nutrition, ultimately aiming to ensure progressive realisation of child’s rights in Europe.

On 24 March 2021, the European Commission presented its proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee. According to this proposal, governments will submit to the Commission national action plans on how to implement it.

To test how the European Child Guarantee could work in practice, the European Commission has partnered with UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) to run, until July 2022, pilot projects in seven Member States: **Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania and Spain**. The 24-month pilot programme will inform the implementation of the European Child Guarantee at the EU level as well as showcase innovative approaches and develop European Child Guarantee national action plans for children in the seven Member states.

Programmatic
Update
June 2021

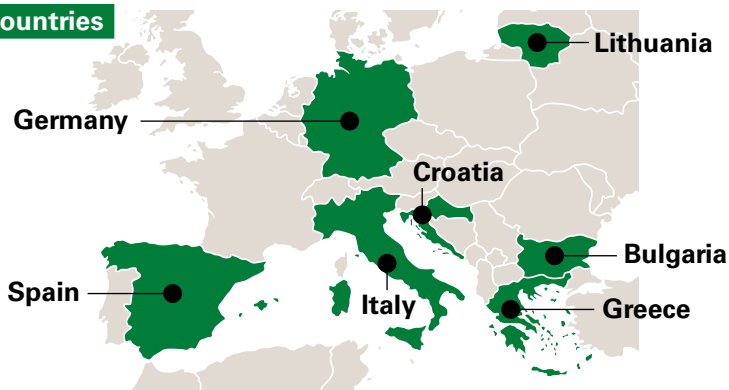
1 in 5 children in the EU at risk of poverty (2019)

‘**The European Child Guarantee**’ aims to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and exclusion.

¹ Source: Eurostat 2019 data 22.2%

Phase III of the European Child Guarantee in a Snapshot

7 countries



3 Pillars of Intervention

1) Evidence generation and analysis	2) Policy engagement and national action plans	3) Integrated models of services and interventions
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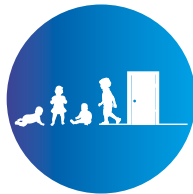
6 Target Groups



children with disabilities



children in precarious family situations



children residing in institutions



migrant and refugee children



children with a minority racial or ethnic background (particularly Roma)



children experiencing severe housing deprivation

5 Areas of Services



healthcare



education



early childhood education and care



adequate housing



healthy nutrition

Testing innovative and evidence-based models of services for the most disadvantaged children

In **4 countries** (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Italy), in close cooperation with the national and local governments, **evidenced-based and sustainable models of services and interventions are being introduced and tested for replicability**. The services are integrated and coordinated across multiple sectors, while also being mainstreamed into local and national service provision systems.

The interventions build on existing subnational responses, in order to leverage what is already working and in place and are supported by capacity-building, systems strengthening, and community mobilisation measures, as needed. These models ultimately aim to inform how children at risk and affected by poverty and social exclusion can be reached and linked to key European Child Guarantee services.

Effective engagement with regional and local government and other stakeholders has been established in all 4 countries, including through agreements and **sub-national multi-sector coordination structures** which oversee and monitor the planning and implementation of the models of services and interventions.



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GREECE



5 Interventions

- De-institutionalisation
- Foster care
- Supported independent living
- Skills development
- Inclusive education

4 target groups

- Children with disabilities
- Children in precarious family situations
- Children and young people in migration
- Children in institutions/alternative care

1 Region

Attica Region

In Greece the interventions in the framework of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee aim to ensure improved access to family and community-based care, support services, and inclusive education for *children and young people in Greece, including children and young people in migration, children with disabilities and children in institutional care*, thus reducing their risk of poverty and social exclusion.

<p>De-institutionalisation</p> <p>What: National authorities have a clear strategy for de-institutionalization based on a participatory process and on solid evidence generation. In addition, local and regional authorities in a selected region are supported to facilitate de-institutionalisation and prevent new placements of disadvantaged children in long-term residential care. Strengthening a gatekeeping system and the capacities of the social workforce are key elements of this approach.</p> <p>Where: National / Attica region</p> <p>Progress: A consultation process with authorities/decision makers at different levels of governance, civil society and faith-based organisations as well with children and young people and carers has been initiated with the aim of forging a national vision for the childcare reform and the related Child Guarantee National Action Plan in Greece.</p> <p>In April the MoU between UNICEF and the Welfare Centre of Attika managing public residential institutions in the Attika Region was signed, formalizing our collaboration in order to ensure children under the care of commonly chosen institutions have access to appropriate community and family based care through the development and piloting of transformation plans.</p> <p>The work has started to develop the Transformation Plans of the residential institutions in cooperation with partners.</p>	<p>Foster care</p> <p>What: Operational framework for a national foster care system is in place, including technical support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for the operationalization of foster care benefits at national level, and a public campaign to promote foster care. In addition, foster programs, piloted in the region of Attica, include screening and training new foster parents, monitoring of children's wellbeing, supporting foster families and children, and supporting the child's reintegration into their biological family or towards adoption.</p> <p>Where: Attica region</p> <p>Progress: UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with technical expertise to address bottlenecks of the newly implemented Registries for Foster Care and the expansion of the database.</p> <p>The kick-off meeting for the software development for the support of the Foster Care Allowance took place in April with the participation of all involved. Subsequent meetings were organized and will continue to be arranged on a regular basis in order to clarify issues regarding the allowance and finalize the Ministerial Decision that will reflect the decisions made.</p> <p>The national campaign on foster care was launched in the end of May.</p>	<p>Supported independent living</p> <p>What: Supported Independent Living (SIL) is integrated as a standard alternative care modality of the national child protection system. This includes an evaluation of the SIL model as it was developed and implemented for Unaccompanied Children, the integration in the national regulatory framework to expand the service and integrate into the national childcare system and piloting in the selected region.</p> <p>Where: Attica region</p> <p>Progress: The evaluation of the SIL model by the independent assessors was completed. A kick off meeting with UNICEF's implementing partner and the MoLSA took place in order to discuss the next steps on the implementation. The establishment of a small technical working group was agreed to be called in May.</p>
<p>Integrated skills development</p> <p>What: Adolescents at risk including unaccompanied children and children with complex needs have access to opportunities for social and economic inclusion – with a focus on life skills, job readiness and transition towards adulthood.</p> <p>Where: Attica region</p> <p>Progress: Partnership with Greek Manpower Employment Organization and letter of agreement signed. Pool of potential beneficiaries identified ready to carry out assessment and profiling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The working group including relevant authorities such as Ministry of Education and that of Migration Policy, took place in March. Participants gained common ground and decided on next steps. - Skills development programs related to job readiness are planned in order to be implemented as soon as the COVID 19 restrictions are allowing. - Two introductory career counselling workshops for the children from special vocational schools have taken place in April 	<p>Inclusive education</p> <p>What: Schools become more inclusive, ensuring quality education for all children, including those with disabilities in families or in institutional care and migrant children. This will include a teacher capacity building programmes, piloting the services and interventions in Attica region and a sensitisation campaign on the power and benefits of inclusive education.</p> <p>Where: Attica region</p> <p>Progress: An agreement has been reached with the University of Thessaly, in cooperation with the National Kapodistrian University. The bottleneck research on inclusive education in Greece started end January. The first meeting of the dedicated working group took place in March 2021 with the participation of relevant ministries and regional authorities.</p> <p>The implementation plan, including the training programme is about to start in 30 schools in Attica region, which are identified jointly with the Ministry of Education.</p>	



Foster Care Launch Event, From the left, Messrs. M. Sarafoglou, M. Frangoulis, E. Zouganeli, G. Perris, M. Vardinogianni, L. Calestini, D. Michailidou

GREECE

A FAMILY FOR EVERY CHILD IN GREECE

A new Foster Care model and sensitization campaign was announced by Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Domna Michailidou, on 25 May during a high level event held in the Athens Concert Hall, co-organized with UNICEF Greece Country Office. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in Greece is prioritizing Foster Care as an alternative care model, aiming at the gradual deinstitutionalization of children living in care facilities and institutions across the country.

Following the implementation of the new Adoption-Foster Care system that allowed almost 700 children to find their own family in less than a year, in 2021 the new Foster Care model is introduced through a national sensitization campaign launched jointly by the Ministry in partnership with UNICEF with funding and the European Commission, as part of the European Child Guarantee pilot programme aiming to find “A family, for every child” in the country. Deputy Minister Michailidou also announced the creation of paidi.gov.gr, a new digital platform dedicated to children, through which prospective foster parents can receive information and support.

UNICEF Representative in Greece Mr. Luciano Calestini underlined UNICEF’s commitment to support the Greek State’s efforts to ensure every child in the country receives the support and care they deserve through a family environment, a right that is mentioned multiple times at the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thanking also the European Commission for their support. The campaign is an initiative of the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNICEF’s Office in Greece, in partnership with the European Union under the #EUChildGuarantee pilot programme.

[Read Press Release here](#)