



EU CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION PLATFORM

#EUChildParticipation
#EUChildGuarantee



BREAKING THE CYCLE OF CHILD POVERTY

STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN CHILD GUARANTEE

THE CHILDREN'S VERSION





WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?



The European Union (EU for short) is a group of 27 countries that work together. The EU wants to make sure that children can have a good life.

Every child and young person deserves support, safety, and opportunities, and to have a voice in decisions that affect their life.

The European Child Guarantee is a plan for EU countries to help children who need support to give them a better chance of having a good future.

This is for children and young people who want to learn about this plan, how it has recently been improved, and how it helps combat poverty.

More than 41,000 children gave their views through the EU Children's Participation Platform which helped to prepare this plan.

Words and phrases marked with an* are explained at the end of the leaflet.





1. WHY DO WE NEED THIS PLAN?

Every child should have a fair chance in life.

Some children and families do not have enough money, which means:

- > Missing out on key things like food, clothing, school materials or a safe and warm place to live
- > Less opportunities to take part in activities, like sports or arts, with other children
- > It is more difficult to succeed at school, which can affect a child's entire life, and even the next generation

It is not the fault of any child if they are born into a poor family, so this needs to be corrected.

Supporting disadvantaged children benefits the whole society by helping them reach their full potential, find good jobs as adults, and contribute to society.

The European Union uses the words child poverty* or being at risk of poverty or social exclusion* to describe these situations. In 2025, nearly a quarter of all the children in the EU were at risk of poverty.

EU countries want this to change and want to help at least 5 million children move out of poverty or social exclusion by 2030.

- > The European Child Guarantee has already helped lots of children:
 - More than 600,000 more children across the EU could take part in school activities like sports or school trips
 - The Netherlands gave free meals at school to more children, including lots of disadvantaged children
 - Poland has set up childcare centres in many places where there had been none
- > But children, organisations and experts say that more needs to be done
- > The goal is to make sure every child has access to the things they need to grow up healthy, safe, and included

The plan gives ideas to EU countries on actions for what needs to change or improve and helps find money and other resources for the countries to do it.





2. WHO NEEDS EXTRA HELP?

Some children face more challenges than others and should get extra help when they need it.

The European Child Guarantee is designed to help children who do not have enough money, but it also offers support to other groups of children who need help, such as:

- > Children with disabilities
- > Roma children*
- > Children in alternative care*
- > Children with nowhere to live or living in unsafe homes
- > Children from ethnic or religious minority backgrounds
- > Young people leaving alternative care and starting to live on their own



3. NEW EU ACTIONS

Work is ongoing to better support children in the coming years.

Some ideas include:

- > Asking children and families what would help parents find work, (e.g. better childcare support when parents are at work)
- > New projects on childcare, education, sport, culture, and inclusion
- > Looking at ways to give more financial support to families with children
- > Creating a mental health and well-being toolkit* with UNICEF, with simple guides, activities, and ideas to help people understand mental health and know how to get help
- > Setting up mentoring* schemes to support children who may need extra help
- > Helping schools and services better support Roma children
- > Testing a European Child Guarantee Card* to make it easier for children and families to get help
- > Linking the European Child Guarantee more closely with the Youth Guarantee, so support continues as children grow older
- > Offering more support to cities, regions and local organisations working with children





4. MORE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Children do best when their families have the support they need.

When families get the support they need, children can grow up healthier, learn better, and feel more secure. If support is missing during childhood, more help is often needed later in life with healthcare, housing and other social support.

The goals are that:

- > Parents and carers have stable, well-paid jobs, and enough money for everyday things like food, housing, clothing, transport, and school supplies
- > Childcare and preschool are available to make it easier for parents and carers, especially mothers, to work or study
- > If earnings from work are not enough, families can get child or family benefits* and other extra support they need



5. BETTER SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

All children should be able to take part in the opportunities around them.

Growing up with money problems can affect children's physical health, mental health, learning, friendships, safety and future opportunities. Children and families should know what is available for them and how to get it.

Services should be based on what children really need, not complicated systems. Whenever possible, support services should be put together so families can get help without going to many separate places.

Important calls for change include:

- > More childcare and preschool places
- > More healthy school meals
- > More sports, arts, cultural and after-school activities
- > More tutoring, homework help, and extra learning support
- > Better mental health* support in schools, healthcare, and the community
- > Mentors or trusted adults who can support children through difficult times





6. SUPPORT FOR WELL-BEING AND SAFETY

Every child has the right to feel safe, supported and protected online and offline.

Problems at home, school or with money can affect some children's well-being and health, making them feel stressed, lonely or anxious.

It is important that children and families get help as early as possible. This can include help during early childhood, at school, or through mental health services and healthcare.

- > Getting help early can stop problems from getting worse and help children stay healthy, learn well, and feel supported
- > Schools, healthcare services, and social workers should work together to make sure children can get the help they need more easily
- > Online platforms should also do more to help keep children safe

Both online and offline safety are really important, and EU countries should continue working to improve how children are protected to reduce risks and help keep them safe.



7. SUPPORT FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Support should not stop when children turn 18.

The aim is to make sure young people receive the help they need as they move from childhood into adulthood, so they can build a bright future for themselves.

This is especially important for children living in alternative care situations who may not have a family to support them.

Turning 18 is a big change, and many young people still need help to:

- > Finish school or training
- > Find a place to live
- > Get a job
- > Learn how to live on their own

One tool to support this is called the Youth Guarantee which helps young people aged 15-29 find work, education, training, or apprenticeships.





8. WHO WILL MAKE THE CHANGES HAPPEN?

Improving children's lives and futures is a shared responsibility.

Everyone needs to work closely together, so that children, young people, and families get the help they need:

- > EU institutions
- > National governments
- > Regional and local authorities*
- > Schools, health and social services
- > Civil society organisations* and charities
- > Businesses and foundations
- > Parents, carers and families
- > Children and young people themselves

EU countries are being encouraged to update their national Child Guarantee plans to set clear goals, have enough funding, and make sure children and families are getting the support they need.





WORD MEANINGS

WORD OR PHRASE	WHAT IT MEANS
Alternative care	When a child is not living with their parents and is cared for somewhere else, by relatives, foster carers or in a children's home.
Apprenticeship	A way of learning a job by working with experienced people while also training. It helps you build practical skills by doing real work.
Child and family benefits	Money that governments give to families to help with the costs of raising children, such as food, clothes, and other needs.
Child poverty	When a child's family does not have enough money or support for the things the child needs to live, learn, stay healthy, feel safe and take part in everyday life.
Civil society organisations	Organisations, charities or community groups that work to help people and improve society. Like food banks, youth clubs, or homelessness charities that support families and children.
European Child Guarantee Card	An idea being tested to help children and families find information about services and support more easily, while protecting privacy and avoiding stigma.
Funding	Money given to help pay for projects, services or activities that support people and communities. In the EU, funding can come from EU institutions, national governments, or other organisations.
Local authorities	Local governments and public services that help run things like schools, housing, transport and social support in towns, cities, and regions.
Mental health	How we think, feel and cope with everyday life. It includes how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Good mental health means being able to manage everyday difficulties and feel supported when things are difficult.
Mentoring	Support from a trusted older person who listens, gives advice, encourages you and helps you make choices.
Roma children	Roma people are an ethnic minority group that lives in many EU countries. Roma children are not always treated fairly and may find it harder to get the support and opportunities they need.
Social exclusion	When someone is unable to take part in things that many others can. This can happen because of a lack of money, support, or opportunities. It may mean missing out on activities, friendships, services, or community life.
Toolkit	A collection of guides, activities, ideas, and practical tools that help people learn about a topic and know what action to take.



#EUChildGuarantee



#EUChildParticipation



**Publications Office
of the European Union**

Law | Data | Publications

© European Union, 2026

PDF KE-01-26-101-EN-N ISBN 978-92-68-43219-8 doi:10.2767/4970797

