CHILD GUARANTEE: The Fundamentals

One out of every four children in the EU is currently living a childhood in which opportunities to be healthy, to learn, to participate and to reach their full potential are being cut short. Poverty and deprivation in childhood can mark children for the rest of their lives; they can undermine the child’s health, education and prospects for future income, as well as the child’s ability to thrive and be accepted into society as an adult. Poverty and social exclusion of children can lead to intergenerational cycles of disadvantage. Countries in Europe are struggling to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children, particularly: children with disabilities, children in precarious family situations, children residing in institutions and migrant and refugee children. Now, an already serious problem is being further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ‘Child Guarantee’ is an initiative of the European Commission which aims to ensure that the most vulnerable children in the European Union have access to healthcare, education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition, ultimately aiming to ensure progressive realisation of child’s rights in Europe. The European Commission has partnered with UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia for the Phase III of the Preparatory Action for a Child Guarantee aiming to demonstrate the feasibility of the Child Guarantee in seven elected EU Member states. The 24-month pilot programme, “Testing the Child Guarantee in the EU Member states,” will contribute to developing the Child Guarantee framework at the EU level as well as showcase innovative approaches and develop national action plans to reduce child poverty and address systemic disadvantages for children in seven Member states: Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania and Spain. During this period, UNICEF will be supporting the European Commission and the seven countries in a series of activities at EU-wide, national and sub-national levels.
The Main Results of Phase III of the Child Guarantee will be:

1. **National Action Plans** to address child poverty and social exclusion will be developed, based on a comprehensive policy and programme deep dive, to serve as models for how the Child Guarantee can be rolled out across EU Member states.

2. **Innovative and evidence-based models of services and interventions** focused on the most vulnerable children will be developed, implemented and assessed as concrete strategies to reach the most vulnerable children.

The three key pillars of intervention of Phase III of the Child Guarantee:

I. Evidence generation and analysis of existing national policies  
II. Policy Engagement to develop National Action Plans  
III. Improving Supply, Demand and Service Quality

**Target Groups**

The four target groups are:

- Children with disabilities
- Children in precarious family situations
- Children residing in institutions
- Migrant and refugee children

**The Child Guarantee as a Policy Framework for EU-27**

The programme will result in an EU-wide Child Guarantee Programme framework to reduce child poverty and social exclusion at scale. The pilot will provide valuable opportunities to learn across countries and identify and share models and services which present the most compelling evidence that investing in the poorest children is the most effective way of breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage across Europe. It will also provide concrete examples of how seven governments across Europe incorporate a Child Guarantee in national and sub-national planning and budgeting. These examples of visible, national plans will be a valuable contribution for rolling out a Child Guarantee in Europe and will provide space for learning and exchange across countries. Working hand in hand with governments, the pilot will aim to ensure principles of government ownership, national and sub-national relevance, civil society participation, and incorporation of the perspectives of young people. The pilot will distill lessons learned, and inform the European Commission’s next steps to support, monitor and promote the EU Recommendation on a Child Guarantee as it begins to roll out in 2021.
High-level Launch of the Phase III of Child Guarantee

To formally launch Phase III, a virtual event was held on 12 November 2020, organized jointly by the European Commission and UNICEF, and attended by Ministers or Deputy Ministers in charge of social affairs and State Secretaries from across the participating countries. All Member states participating in the event, entitled “The Child Guarantee: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage: Addressing Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in the EU,” echoed their support for the Child Guarantee and expressed the need for continued momentum to build on the political will ahead of the adoption of the Child Guarantee Resolution in March of 2021. The high-level group agreed to reconvene in six to nine months under the auspices of the European Commission and together with UNICEF to monitor the progress made and to further inform the roll out of a Child Guarantee across Europe.
**Pillar I:**
Evidence generation and analysis of existing national policies

**Meta-analysis** will be carried out across the 27 Member states to identify the current state of play on child poverty and social exclusion across Member States, with particular attention to the situation of the four marginalized target groups. The meta-analysis will build on key learnings from Phase I and Phase II of the Child Guarantee and will provide evidence of EU/international policies and programmes that have a demonstrable impact on child poverty and social exclusion.

**Operational Research** will be carried out in the 4 Countries which are implementing specific models of services to address the needs of the 4 vulnerable groups identified by the CG as priority groups. It will build evidence on ‘how things work’ in different contexts for the 4 vulnerable groups of children, generating generalizable evidence on the practicalities of implementing effective and efficient integrated services for vulnerable children in Europe.

**Progress to date:**
- ToRs for Meta-analysis and Operational Research developed by the UNICEF ECAR Office;
- UNICEF’s Office of Research identified as implementing partner;
- Meta-Analysis and Operational Research to start end 2020.

**Deep Dive Analysis** will examine the enabling environment for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion in each country, to generate knowledge not only on what does and does not work for child poverty and social exclusion in the national context, but also on what determines the success of interventions and policies. It will be tailored to the needs of each country for evidence around child poverty and social exclusion and will be developed in a coordinated and multi-sector manner. Led by government, the analysis will further inform the development of the national Action Plans on Child Protection and Social Exclusion.

**Progress to date:**
- Template terms of reference developed by UNICEF ECARO and shared with all participating countries;
- Selection of specific areas of focus for Deep Dives, with the involvement of government representatives/CG Steering Committees, to develop 5 country-specific TORs: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Spain;
- Recruitment of research partners to begin in December;
- Deep Dives to start in early 2021.

**Meta-Analysis:**
A systematic review and meta-analysis of the context and policy environment for addressing child poverty and social exclusion in all EU-27 countries.

**Operational Research:**
Building evidence on ‘how things work’ in different contexts for the 4 vulnerable groups of children, generating generalizable evidence and feeding this back directly to practitioners.

**Deep Dive:**
Analysis of policies, programmes, services, budgets, and mechanisms addressing child poverty and social exclusion in the countries.
Pillar II: Policy Engagement to develop National Action Plans

- **Government-led participatory and coordinated processes** in 7 EU CG Programme countries to develop National Action Plans/strengthen existing strategies and plans for addressing Child Poverty and Social Exclusion of children in an integrated manner to break the cycle of disadvantage.

- Participatory process led by the EU/UNICEF CG Steering Committee to **develop and verify the draft EU-wide CG Programme framework** document.

**Progress to date:**

- Effective engagement with national stakeholders in all 7 countries;
- Steering Committees for the CG established/agreed in 6 countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, and Spain;
- Policy “hooks” (e.g., existing national planning processes, poverty reduction strategies) for National Action Plans identified in 5 countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, and Spain;
- National child/ youth participation mechanisms identified or established in 5 countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, and Spain.

**Highlights**

**BULGARIA**
MoU for the establishment of Coordination & Monitoring Committees at national, district and municipal levels.

**CROATIA**
CG Steering Committee co-chaired by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and UNICEF.

**GREECE**
Steering Committee for Child Guarantee established (and already met) by MOLSA Deputy Minister and UNICEF, and participation of different Ministries at Secretary General level; First SC meeting held on 11 November 2020 Consultations with children in institutions, including children with disabilities and foster parents were organized and have informed the De-Institutionalization Action Plan.

**ITALY**
ToR for mapping of alternative care models and development of a methodological guidance on the use of alternative care have been developed. Ongoing discussion with the Central Government to enlarge the scope of the interventions to other TGs. Implementation of two of the models (foster care and life skills and job readiness) have already started.

**SPAIN**
3 Committees established:
1) Management Committee for the overall management of the CG process;
2) Steering Committee for the Deep Dive analysis; and
3) Advisory Committee including academia, private sector and children.
Pillar III:
Improving Supply, Demand and Service Quality

Sustainable, scalable and evidence-based models of services, interventions and mechanisms targeting the 4 TG: Participatory and coordinated processes led by subnational Government in the selected implementation sites in 4 EU CG Programme countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Italy to design, implement/pilot, and monitor models of services, interventions, and mechanisms that build on existing subnational responses, leverage what is already working and in place, and are supported by capacity-building, systems strengthening, and community mobilisation measures, as needed.

Progress to date:

• Effective engagement with sub-national stakeholders in all 4 countries;
• Sub-national coordination structures established/agreed in all 4 countries;
• Sub-national child/youth participation mechanisms have been established in 3 countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy.

See diagram overleaf →

Highlights

BULGARIA
MoU signed for engagement of key line ministries and pilot district administrations and for the establishment of Coordination & Monitoring Committees at national, district and municipal level to involve key shareholders and to be chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, District Governors and Mayors, respectively.

CROATIA
Signed MoU with pilot county. LoA signed to strengthen the outreach work of Social Welfare Centre Čakovec and Branch Family Centre to provide timely and targeted social welfare and child protection services. Partnership agreements prepared and signed for three key components of the programme: parent and family support programmes, services; access to pre-primary education for the most vulnerable groups of children and access to early intervention services.

ITALY
ToR for mapping of alternative care models and development of a methodological guidance on the use of alternative care for UASC, young migrants and refugees have been developed. Ongoing discussion with the Central Government to enlarge the scope of the interventions to other TGs.

GREECE
A virtual Conference on ‘Visioning Child Care System Reform in Greece’ took place on 23 November hosted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and UNICEF Greece.

Cross-Cutting Area:
Communications and Advocacy

Progress to date:

• Country-specific multi-level and multi-stakeholder communication and visibility strategy/plan developed in 5 Countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Spain;
• Dedicated online pages (UNICEF ECARO, Bulgaria, Italy and Croatia) and social media posts (all countries);
• Press Release on Launch Event in 6 countries;
• National media and Governmental partner media channels have echoed the CG activities with UNICEF.
# Progress of interventions per Country and Target Groups

The table captures the progress made in the implementation of the planned models of services and interventions in all countries, showing that all interventions, are on track of reaching their results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Implementation countries</th>
<th>Target groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
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<td>Integrated child protection and family support practices</td>
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<td>Home visitation</td>
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<td>Early childhood interventions</td>
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<td>Inclusive and quality education (pre-school and school)</td>
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<td>Deinstitutionalisation of children</td>
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<td>Supported independent living</td>
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<td>Foster care</td>
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<td>Co-housing care</td>
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<td>Enhancing life skills, job readiness, and transitioning to adulthood</td>
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<td>Inter-sectorial collaboration for child wellbeing</td>
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<td>Leaving care youth participation</td>
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● ON TRACK
● Target Groups involved in the model
Cover photo: A Roma family, mother and her baby (1 y.o.), live in Nadezhda neighborhood in Sliven in poverty with lots of cousins and other relatives – both children and adults. Different generations share a narrow living space with living conditions on the verge of the sanitary minimum. The family is being consulted by the experts of the UNICEF-supported Center for Maternal and Child Health.