

PHASE III OF THE PREPARATORY ACTION FOR A CHILD GUARANTEE





# **Phase III of Child Guarantee: The Fundamentals**

and sub-national levels.

One out of every five<sup>1</sup> 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; undermine a child's health, education and prospects for future income, as well as the child's ability to thrive in adulthood. Poverty and social exclusion can lead to intergenerational cycles of disadvantage for vulnerable children. In Europe countries 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.

> 1 in 5 children in the EU is living in

The 'Child Guarantee,' 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.

> 'Child Guarantee' aims to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and exclusion.

poverty

**Programmatic** 

**Update** 

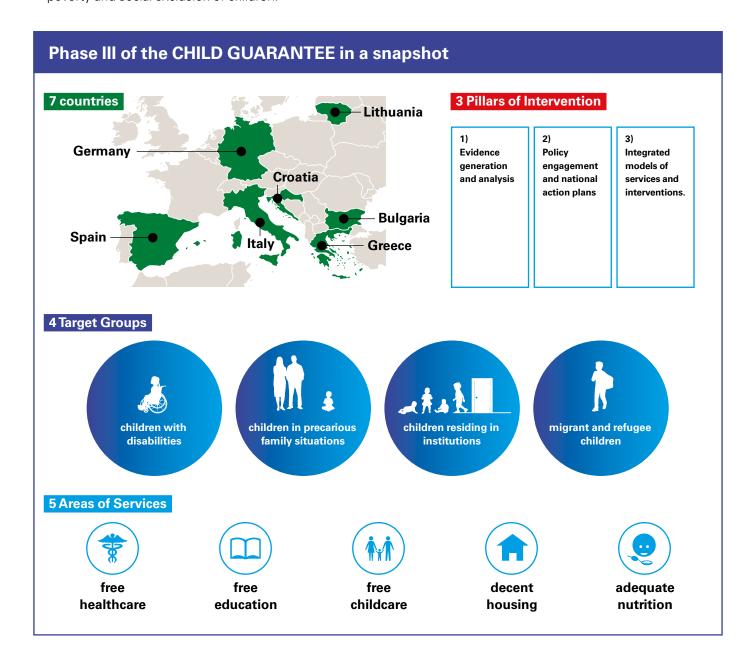
March 2021

The European Commission has partnered with UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECAR) for Phase III of the Preparatory Action for a Child Guarantee to demonstrate the feasibility of the Child Guarantee in seven selected 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

Source: Eurostat 2019 data 22.2%

#### The Main Results of the Phase III of the Child Guarantee:

- National Action Plans to address child poverty and social exclusion are in development based on a comprehensive policy and programme Deep Dive. The national action plans will 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 are being developed, implemented and assessed as concrete strategies to reach the most vulnerable children.
- 3. **EU-wide Child Guarantee Operational Framework** will be developed, verified and recommended to the Commission in order to inform the implementation of the Child Guarantee by EU Member States as well as its monitoring of progress and outcomes by the Commission and states. This framework will include common and comparable monitoring indicators, including also country-specific ones, which will be compiled in a scoreboard. It will contain recommendations for strengthening national statistical offices and data systems, as well as 'models' of National Action Plans to tackle child poverty and social exclusion of children.



#### Pillar I:

# Evidence generation and analysis on child poverty and social exclusion of children

A meta-analysis is being carried out in partnership with the UNICEF Office of Research "Innocenti". The aim of the meta-analysis is to help understand the broad contextual factors that are correlated with success in the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion. The meta-analysis is building on key learnings from Phase I and Phase II of the Child Guarantee and will provide evidence of enabling factors that have a demonstrable impact on the integration of the Child Guarantee services within and across various dimensions – policy, governance, budgeting and services. The final results of the meta-analysis will be available in June 2021.

#### **Meta-analysis:**

"A meta-analysis of the context and policy enabling factors for addressing child poverty and social exclusion across EU-27 countries."

**Operational research** is being carried out in the 4 countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Italy) which are implementing specific models of services to address the needs of the most disadvantaged children. The operational research aims to build evidence on 'how things work' in different contexts, generating generalizable evidence on the practicalities of implementing effective and efficient integrated services for vulnerable children in Europe. Stakeholder inception meetings and mapping of programmes are ongoing.

#### **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** examines the enabling environment for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion in each of the 7 countries, 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 is being tailored to the needs of each country for evidence around child poverty and social exclusion and being 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 poverty and social exclusion. **All Deep Dives will be carried out in the first half of 2021.** 

#### **Deep Dive Analysis:**

"Analysis of policies, programmes, services, budgets, and mechanisms addressing child poverty and social exclusion in the countries to inform the National Action Plans for child poverty and social exclusion of children"



INICE/UNI158166

## Pillar II:

# National Action Plans to address child poverty and social exclusion of children

Member States will be driving the process for the development of evidence-based informed, costed and monitorable **National Action Plans to address Child Poverty and Social Exclusion**.

Steering mechanisms have been established in all countries, with the government at the helm to lead and oversee the work on the Deep Dive Analysis and support the development of such plans. UNICEF together with the governments will work to ensure that these plans are based on robust evidence and rely on the findings and recommendations of the Deep Dives (see previous section), and that they are participatory and have sound monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

# Updates from the 7 Member States on Pillar I and II

Country	Deep Dives	Steering Committee
Bulgaria	The Deep Dive has a particular emphasis on the situation of children since the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, with a focus on families with children who have been most affected, main trends, impact of the crisis on the level and impacts of child poverty.	The Steering Committee has been established following a memorandum of understanding signed between UNICEF, The Ministry of Labour and other key line ministries and it is tasked to provide overall guidance and support to the implementation of Phase III of the Child Guarantee.
Croatia	The Deep Dive is a significant input for shaping the understanding and response to child poverty and ensure it is a vital component of the National Plan for Poverty Reduction and other policy documents relevant to addressing child poverty.	The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy co-chairs the National Steering Child Guarantee Committee together with UNICEF. The Committee meets quarterly and comprises of major line ministries, The Governor of the selected county (Medjimurje), the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities and one Roma representative.
Greece	A topic of particular interest for the Deep Dive research in Greece is bringing together evidence on child poverty and social exclusion to inform the Child Guarantee and the National Action Plan.	Steering Committee for Child Guarantee has been established and is co-chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and UNICEF and includes as members different Ministries at Secretary General level. The First Steering Committee meeting was held on 11 November 2020. Governance plans include the establishment of technical working groups to oversee specific pillars of work.
Italy	The Deep Dive Analysis in Italy will include a particular focus on barriers to social services system access for disadvantaged children, public policies at the different levels of administration in Italy, migration- and disability- focused policies, among others.	An inter-institutional Child Guarantee Steering Committee has been established comprised of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for Family Policies, UNICEF and the Italian National Committee for UNICEF. Its main role will be to lead and oversee the testing of the Child Guarantee in Italy.

Country	Deep Dives	Steering Committee
Germany	A synthesis of policies, programmes and mechanisms addressing child poverty and social exclusion in the past 10 years including also examples of evidence-based practices that ensure effective access to basic rights for the most disadvantaged children.	The synthesis report will be developed in close partnership with the government of Germany, and in particular with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
Lithuania	The Deep Dive in Lithuania will have a broad scope and will be looking at all target groups of vulnerable children. It includes a particular focus on the understanding of the role of civil society in service provision and the ways in which children and families can be empowered to address poverty and exclusion problems.	The Steering Committee has been established and is chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, with the participation of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and Ombudsperson for Children's Rights Office. It will support process of developing a costed and monitorable National Action Plan for the Child Guarantee, based on the findings from the Deep Dive Analysis.
Spain	The Deep Dive will include among others a particular focus on the interplay and cooperation between different levels of government (national, regional and local), barriers to service access for the most vulnerable children, analysis of social protection systems and bring together available data most relevant for the monitoring and evaluation of the Child Guarantee. Its findings will inform the development of the National Action Plan for the Child Guarantee in Spain.	The central Child Guarantee Management Committee has been established including the office of the High Commissioner Against Child Poverty, Ministry of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda, UNICEF ECARO and UNICEF Spain



UNICEF/UND

#### **Pillar III:**

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**, **sustainable and scalable models of services and interventions are being introduced and tested.** 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 what could be the potential Child Guarantee services for children at risk and affected by poverty and social exclusion.

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



O UNICEF/UN



Children with disabilities; Children in precarious family situations

## 3 Districts

Burgas
Sliven
Stara Zagora
--> 10 Municipalities

#### **4 Interventions**

Home Visiting
Early Childhood
Intervention Services
Inclusive pre-school
education services
Outreach child and
family-centered
preventive and support
services

In <u>Bulgaria</u> the interventions in the framework of Phase III of the Child Guarantee aim to improve the living conditions and increase access and use of integrated services for *children with disabilities and children in precarious family situations*- including children in poor households and extremely poor households and Roma children- through the testing and scaling up of 4 innovative models in three districts of the country.

#### Home visiting program

What: Home visiting service and the provision of individualized guidance, information and support for caregivers of children 0-3 years old and pregnant women, with a particular focus on families in precarious situation and children with disabilities. Support will be individualized and tailored to the specific needs of families and children and will include referral to other services (social, educational and health).

Where: Sliven district

Progress: 1,549 families with 1,704 children have received support (October – December 2020) to ensure nurturing care for children 0-3 and pregnant women. Home visiting staff have been trained on early childhood development and engagement of fathers.

## **Early childhood interventions**

What: A system approach to early childhood intervention (ECI) for children (0-3) with disabilities and developmental difficulties and their caregivers is being introduced. The project will build on the existing ECI services and will expand their capacities to identify and support more children at risk of or with developmental difficulties and disabilities in disadvantaged communities, as well as to apply evidence-based, family-centred practices.

**Where:** Sliven and Stara Zagora districts.

**Progress:** Grant agreements have been signed with 3 pilot municipalities; EarlyAid has been identified as partner for the training of ECI services and the Bulgarian Pediatric Association-for training of health care professionals.

#### **Inclusive pre-school education**

What: 30 pilot kindergartens will provide quality inclusive pre-school education services for children with disabilities and learning difficulties. Their role is in early identification of children at risk of learning difficulties and the skills and knowledge of their personnel to work with children with disabilities will be strengthened. Support specialists and teacher assistants will be added to strengthen the support for inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education.

**Where:** 10 pilot municipalities in Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora districts.

**Progress:** Grant agreements signed with 7 municipalities; needs assessment well under way and trainings modules for staff have been developed and adapted to online modality. Trainings started on 8 March 2021.

# Integrated child protection and family support

What: Ensure that children in precarious family situations and their families have access to integrated child and family-centered support services that address their specific vulnerabilities and prevent child-family separation. Multi-disciplinary teams will provide integrated and comprehensive child-and-family centered support to hard-to-reach children and families, through outreach approach. Cross-sectoral cooperation and case management at local level will be strengthened to prevent child-family separation.

**Where:** Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora districts.

**Progress:** Outreach teams are being established and grant agreements signed in 7 municipalities. UNICEF is partnering with the Agency for Social Assistance to strengthen the capacities of 11 Child Protection Departments at local level.

#### **Local level Coordination**

3 District Coordination and Monitoring Committees and 10 Municipal Coordination and Monitoring Committees have been established and formalized with the aim of providing overall guidance and support to the implementation of the Phase III of the Child Guarantee at district and municipal level.





Children with disabilities; Children in precarious family situations

## 1 Districts

Medjimure

--> 7 Municipalities

#### 3 Interventions

Integrated child protection and family support services Early Childhood Intervention Services

Access to quality preprimary educaiton

**In Croatia** the specific interventions in the framework of Phase III of the Child Guarantee aim to ensure access to integrated, multidisciplinary, adequately resourced community and family-based support services, pre-primary-education and early childhood intervention for *children living in precarious situations* (including families living in poor households, with special focus on Roma children and families) and children with disabilities in the Medjimurje District in Croatia.

# Integrated child protection and family support

What: The most vulnerable children and their parents and caregivers (including Roma) have access to integrated child protection and family support services that enable prevention, early identification, referral and provision of services in accordance with the child's best. This will include supporting selected municipalities with the establishment of community resource centers as well as supporting the capacities of local authorities and service providers.

Where: Medjimurje County
Progress: Social Welfare Centre
Čakovec, Branch Family Centre, has
been supported with additional
capacities. Parenting support
programmes already provided to 117
beneficiaries. Capacity development
of social welfare workforce: adaptation
and development of training materials,
including supervision and
establishment of multisectoral
teams ongoing.

# Quality pre-primary education

What: All vulnerable children (including Roma, children with disabilities and children living in precarious family situations) have effective access to quality pre-primary education to prevent social exclusion and early school-drop out. This will include strengthening capacities of pre-primary education professionals and parents, establishment of new facilities, and development of a regulative framework for local government.

Where: Medjimurje Country

Progress: Due to COVID-19, the training "Persona Doll" aimed at helping educators to help young children to talk about their ideas, experiences and feelings in a safe space, has been translated to online modality. Mobile service provision modalities are being explored to reach children during the pandemic.

#### **Early childhood interventions**

What: Young children with or at risk of developmental delay and those with disability and their families will have improved access to integrated and coordinated early childhood interventions services that timely and adequately address their developmental needs. This includes provision of coordinated and integrated quality early childhood intervention services, strengthened knowledge and skills of health, education and social protection professionals, parenting support and improved data collection.

Where: Medjimurje County

**Progress:** An analysis of ECI services and other ECD resources for young children and the development of an integrated ECI Action Plan/Framework for the Medjimurje County is underway. The County has established a multisectoral task group on ECI to oversee the piloting of these services. The piloting of the service is also underway in cooperation with the Međimurjee Association for Early Childhood Intervention.

#### **Local level Coordination**

#### **Coordination:**

A **Programme Implementation Committee** on the level of Medjimurje
County has been established to
provide overall guidance and support to
the implementation and monitoring of
the Programme at the county level,
with the representatives of the
Medjimure county, the 7
municipalities, 1 representative from
the Roma community and UNICEF.



INICEE/HN0392





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

# 1 Region

Attica Region

#### **5 Interventions**

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

**In Greece** the interventions in the framework of Phase III of the 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.

#### **De-institutionalisation**

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 deinstitutionalisation and prevent new placements of vulnerable children in long-term residential care. Strengthening a gatekeeping system and the capacities of the social workforce are key elements of this approach.

Where: National / Attica region

**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 National Action Plan in Greece. An agreement has been reached with the Attica region to pilot D-I interventions in 4 institutions in this region.

#### **Foster care**

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.

Where: Attica region

**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.

The national campaign on foster care to be launched in late March 2021.

## Supported independent living

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.

Where: Attica region

**Progress:** An assessment of existing SIL services is ongoing and expected to be concluded in March 2021. The framework for the piloting of SIL in the mainstream child protection system has been developed and the partners are being identified for the transformation.

# Integrated skills development

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. This includes a market feasibility study informing tailored skills building and job readiness program for marginalized adolescents including unaccompanied children.

Where: Attica region

**Progress:** Partnership with Greek Manpower Employment Organization and Letter of Agreement signed. Pool of potential beneficiaries identified ready to carry out assessment and profiling.

#### **Inclusive education**

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 intervention in Attica region and a sensitisation campaign on the power and benefits of inclusive education.

Where: Attica region

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.





Children and young

people in migration
Children with disabilities
Children in institutions/
alternative care
Children in precarious

family situaitons

# 5 regions

Sicily
Lombardia
Latium
Veneto
Emiglia Romagna
(others being defined)

#### 4 Interventions

Specialized foster care
Innovative communitybased housing
Integrated skills
development
Innovative family support
service

**In Italy** the interventions in the framework of Phase III of the Child Guarantee aim at improving access to family and community-based care and support services, as well as to skills building and school-to-work transition, for children and young people, including *children and young people in migration, with disabilities, in institutions and those living in precarious family situations*, thus reducing their risk of poverty and social exclusion.

#### **Foster care**

What: Specialized foster care models will be diversified and promoted to be incorporated in the mainstream childcare system. The intervention will also include the development of training modules and training of trainers, strengthening the skills of frontline workers and the documentation of already existing good practices on foster care to promote and support the scale-up within the national system and legislation.

**Where:** Sicily, Latium, Lombardy and Veneto and other locations to be defined

**Progress:** Implementing partners selected to carry out activities for the diversification of foster care placement and training curriculum developed. Good practices to be documented being selected together with institutional counterparts.

#### Community-based housing

What: Innovative community-based housing arrangements (supervised independent living and co-housing) for adolescents in transition to adulthood are mapped, tested, documented, evaluated and promoted for replication. The intervention will include support to local social services, case management, psycho-social support, cultural mediation, legal counselling, information and facilitation to access to services, as well as strengthening the skills of frontline workers.

**Where:** Sicily, Emilia Romagna, Latium and other locations to be defined

**Progress:** Implementing partners identified through an open call. Discussions on how to integrate the housing component within the national systems ongoing.

## Family support services

What: Innovative Support Centers for Families will be documented, and their offer of services will be specialized through the addition of a model of peer support between families with a specific focus on children with disability and educational poverty.

Where: To be defined

**Progress:** Discussions to define the specific methodology of service and the geographical scope ongoing.

### Integrated skills development

What: An integrated skills development package will improve young people's employability and social inclusion and ensure their effective transition to adulthood. UNICEF's flagship initiative UPSHIFT will seek to empower marginalized adolescents to become social innovators and entrepreneurs. Innovation camps will generate ideas from adolescents on how to address community problems, which will then be supported through a 12-weeks incubation course. In complement, the Mygrants platform will enhance their hard and soft skills and support work internships and job matching.

Where: Sicily, Latium and Lombardy
Progress: Implementing partner
selected and agreement with Mygrant
platform finalized. A series of 12
digitized Innovation & Creativity Camps
have been implemented online in
upper secondary schools involving over
1240 students.



# **Cross-Cutting:**

# Child and Adolescent Participation

Child participation is essential for reaching the most disadvantaged groups of children and is being integrated into all pillars of the Phase III: in evidence generation, policy making and service design and delivery, as well as in advocacy and communication.

At national level all countries are ensuring that children and their parents/carers are empowered to influence the decisions that have an impact on their life by meaningful participation in decision-making. They are participating in Steering Committees which are set up to oversee the implementation of Phase III of the Child Guarantee. In addition, children's voices will be included in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National Action Plans to adress child poverty and social exclusion.

By involving children in the design and delivery of key Child Guarantee services and interventions and putting in place effective feedback mechanisms for children, we can ensure services are accessible and acceptable to the most disadvantaged groups of children and meet their needs. In advocacy and communications, <u>U-Report</u> polls are being employed across target countries and their voices are being reflected in Human Interest Stories.



## **Child Participation in:**

Evidence generation
Policy Making
Decision-making
Service Design and
Delivery

Case management

Monitoring and Evaluation

Advocacy and Communication

## **BULGARIA**

UNICEF has engaged the National Network for Children, an umbrella organization of 150 NGOs working with and for children. 4 national consultations will be held in with young people through the U-Report on topics related to child poverty and social exclusion. 15 adolescent girls and boys from the three pilot districts will be engaged in the implementation of the pilot project. They will conduct their own research on the main topics of the Child Guarantee- access to quality healthcare, education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition- which will be presented and discussed at national and local level.

#### **GREECE**

adolescent participation planned under governance structures and its first meeting is planned for the first quarter of 2021. UNICEF ensured that voices of children in institutions and foster parents were heard by national authorities and decision makers working on the national deinstitutionalisaiton action plan by bringing the results of consultations in the deinstitutionalisation conference.

A dedicated Technical Working

Group will review child and

#### **CROATIA**

Meetings with the Roma youth organization of Croatia have taken place and further activities are being planned to include the voices of Roma children and youth as part of the design and implementation processes for the services in the targeted municipalities as well as at the national level.

## **ITALY UPDATE:**

Enhanced participation of children and youth by establishing a Child Guarantee Children Advisory Board and the mainstreaming of participation through the use of U-Report.

# **Cross-Cutting:**

# Advocacy and Communications

The Communication and Visibility Plan for the Phase III of the Child Guarantee is focused around communication and advocacy at two levels, EU levels and country level, with the objectives of strengthening political commitment and institutional engagement of the Government and other relevant national stakeholders in support of the Child Guarantee; raising awareness and building support for investing in children and the reforms and policies, programmes and services being introduced in Phase III of the Child Guarantee and generating awareness and building support for investing in children and Child Guarantee Phase III to influence EU wide.

The Plan details activities to be undertaken by the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office in collaboration with country offices and country level implementation teams and with the support of the UNICEF Brussels office. The planned activities include Human Interest Stories, Photo essays, videos, Policy Briefs, High-Level and thematic events, incorporating child participation and innovative tools such as <u>U-Report</u> to amplify the voices of children.



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