Phase III of European Child Guarantee: The Fundamentals

More than one out of every five 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’ aims to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and exclusion.

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.

1 Source: Eurostat 2019 data 22.2%
Phase III of the European Child Guarantee in a Snapshot

**7 countries**
- Germany
- Croatia
- Lithuania
- Spain
- Bulgaria
- Greece
- Italy

**3 Pillars of Intervention**
1) Evidence generation and analysis
2) Policy engagement and national action plans
3) Integrated models of services and interventions

**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.
In Bulgaria the interventions in the framework of Phase III of the European 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: All four municipalities Sliven district (Sliven, Nova Zagora, Kotel and Tvarditsa)
Progress: The team of the Centre for Child and Maternal Health has been strengthened through the hiring of three additional visiting nurses. 1,605 families (out of which 136 new families) with 1,786 children have received support in the period January – March 2021 to ensure nurturing care for children 0-3. Despite the difficult situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team of the Medical Center made 1,402 home visits in the same period. The total number of home visits since the start of the pilot project is 3,518.

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: 3 municipalities - Chirpan, Sliven and Stara Zagora
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 Paediatric Association for training of health care professionals. The team of the Centre in Chirpan is strengthened with 3 additional experts on early intervention who are currently being trained by EarlyAid. The other two ECI centres are in the process of recruiting additional experts.

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: The needs assessment of all 30 pilot kindergartens has been completed. 26 additional specialists - speech therapists, psychologists, and resource teachers have been selected and hired in 16 pilot kindergartens. In February 2021, 214 pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff completed the introductory self-paced online modules and 426 staff are currently completing the specific modules of the training programme on inclusive education. Grant agreements have been signed with 3 Regional Centres for Supporting the Process of Inclusive Education in the 3 pilot districts for strengthening their capacity to conduct needs assessment of children with disabilities and to provide enhanced support to kindergartens on individual cases.

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 centred 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: 7 municipalities in three pilot districts Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora
Progress: The capacities of 7 municipal social services have been strengthened through establishment of outreach teams and the hiring of 21 additional social workers and assistants, who are currently being trained. A grant agreement has been signed with the Agency for Social Assistance for strengthening the capacities of 10 Child Protection Departments (CPDs) for more effective and child and family-centred work and with the New Bulgarian University for the training of the CPDs and the adaptation of software tools for integrated provision of child and family support services.

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 European Child Guarantee at district and municipal level. The first meetings of the District Coordination and Monitoring Committees in Sliven, Burgas and Stara Zagora were conducted online in April. The meetings were chaired by the respective Deputy District Governors and included representatives of regional health, education, child and social protection structures, pilot municipalities, service providers and NGOs.
BULGARIA
BUILDING A BRIGHTER WORLD FOR GALIN

Four year old Galin has been diagnosed with autism spectrum condition with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity. The family’s ordeal began when he was one year old and they noticed that unlike children his age, little Galin would not speak and would often not respond to his name when called. They were first alerted by the home-visiting nurse. The nurse referred them to a meeting organized by UNICEF for parents of children with developmental difficulties. It was at that meeting that, at last, they finally came to know the nature of the challenge they were facing. The information presented that day, as well as consecutive consultations with psychiatrists, made it clear to them that their child was suffering from a specific developmental issue and needed support. Difficulties began to mount as the family sought the specialized services to help Galin develop his skills. Unfortunately, such services are not available in their hometown and the family still has to travel miles to visit a psychotherapist and a speech therapist.

It is stories like Galin’s that have shaped European Child Guarantee initiative. The pilot in Bulgaria in partnership with the European Commission, and UNICEF, supports 4 main areas of intervention: home visiting for families with young children, early childhood intervention with support for children with disabilities and developmental difficulties, quality inclusive pre-school education services and outreach to provide child and family-centred support services to disadvantaged families. “It is the goal of the European Child Guarantee project to streamline and integrate these support services to identify developmental difficulties early, initiate referrals, coordinate services and provide family-centered support in the child’s natural environment so no child is left behind despite their circumstances. See Galin’s story here.
In Croatia the specific interventions in the framework of Phase III of the European 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 disadvantaged 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:** The Social Welfare Centre Čakovec “Branch Family Centre”, has been supported with additional capacities. Parenting support programmes and activities already provided to 253 beneficiaries.

To ensure availability of universal parenting support programme 45 new professionals were trained (from kindergartens in 10 municipalities, family centre and CSOs). Indicative parenting support programme (for parents who are raising children in adverse circumstances) was adapted to Roma families, including 21 Roma facilitators from 7 Roma settlements.

To establish community resource centres, Agreements have been signed with 4 municipalities and conceptual designs agreed.

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### Quality pre-primary education

**What:** All disadvantaged 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 County

**Progress:** The first 4-day trainings with teachers and the psychosocial support teams from 6 Medjimurje kindergartens was held in April and May. The early childhood education and care (ECEC) Play Hub in Orehovica operates three days a week to provide children and families a place to meet, play and learn. Preparations are well underway to open new ECEC Play Hubs in Čakovec and Mala Subotica. The Čakovec Faculty of Teacher Education, has been supported with inclusive didactic materials and furniture to support a better preparation of future kindergarten and primary school teachers.

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### 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 (ECI) 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:** A multisectoral task group on ECI has been established at the county level to oversee the piloting of these services. Additionally, the international working group has been established in Medjimurje County for the development of a comprehensive, affordable and quality model of early childhood intervention service. Research on mapping and assessing resources for early intervention and early childhood development services for children and has been completed, presented and discussed as part of the ongoing development of an integrated ECI Action Plan/Framework for Medjimurje County. The piloting of the ECI model service is underway in cooperation with the Medjimurje Association for Early Childhood Intervention. A team for implementation of the outreach for community-based early childhood development and intervention services in Roma settlements for young children and their families is being recruited including a team coordinator, a nurse, a psychologist, ECI professionals and 4 cultural mediators who speak Romani.

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### 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 Medjimurje county, the seven municipalities, one representative from the Roma community and UNICEF. Its first meeting was organized on 9th of February and the second on 5th of May 2021. A stakeholder forum will take place in June 2021.
Mateo was diagnosed with a hearing impairment upon enrolment in kindergarten. For almost two years Valentina had been taking Mateo to various experts and doctors. It was only upon his enrolment in kindergarten that he was diagnosed with bilateral hearing impairment, with the support of early childhood intervention experts. The team from his kindergarten in Čakovec referred her son to specialists educators who were able to support him. Due to his hearing impairment, the development of Mateo’s interaction and communication was delayed, so the experts introduced a low-technology Picture Exchange Communication System. This enabled Mateo to master communication patterns, which experts used for the final development of sign language with him. Mateo is now enrolled in kindergarten and well accepted by his classmates. He was the school’s first child with a hearing impairment, with a teacher assistant, Tatjana, who has been helping him with sign language for three years now. He now uses sign language to cheerfully chat to his Mother, Valentina, about his day in school.

The European Child Guarantee pilot project in Croatia aims to ensure equitable chances in life for every child, so children like Mateo can receive quality inclusive pre-primary education, and that no child is left behind. This begins with addressing the underlying causes of child poverty and social exclusion so that all children can have access to key quality services: child protection services and family support, access to preschool education and access to early intervention services.
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.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>De-institutionalisation</th>
<th>Foster care</th>
<th>Supported independent living</th>
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<td><strong>What:</strong> 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.</td>
<td><strong>What:</strong> 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.</td>
<td><strong>What:</strong> 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 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.</td>
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<td><strong>Where:</strong> National / Attica region</td>
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<td><strong>Progress:</strong> 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. 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. The work has started to develop the Transformation Plans of the residential institutions in cooperation with partners.</td>
<td><strong>Progress:</strong> 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 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. The national campaign on foster care was launched in the end of May.</td>
<td><strong>Progress:</strong> 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.</td>
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<th>Integrated skills development</th>
<th>Inclusive education</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What:</strong> 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.</td>
<td><strong>What:</strong> 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.</td>
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<td><strong>Where:</strong> Attica region</td>
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<td><strong>Progress:</strong> Partnership with Greek Manpower Employment Organization and letter of agreement signed. Pool of potential beneficiaries identified ready to carry out assessment and profiling.</td>
<td><strong>Progress:</strong> 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. 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.</td>
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<td>- 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.</td>
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<td>- Skills development programs related to job readiness are planned in order to be implemented as soon as the COVID 19 restrictions are allowing.</td>
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<td>- Two introductory career counselling workshops for the children from special vocational schools have taken place in April</td>
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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 #EUChild Guarantee pilot programme.

Read Press Release here
In Italy the intervention in the framework of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee aims 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 adolescents – including those transitioning to adulthood – with a particular focus on those identified as more at risk of poverty and social exclusion by the European Child Guarantee, and with specific attention to gender equality.
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<tr>
<th>Foster care</th>
<th>Community-based housing</th>
<th>Social housing and skills building for care leavers</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What:</strong> Specialized foster care models will be diversified and promoted to be incorporated in the mainstream childcare system. The services and interventions 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.</td>
<td><strong>What:</strong> Innovative community-based housing arrangements (supervised independent living) for adolescents in transition to adulthood, including unaccompanied and separated children, are mapped, tested, documented, evaluated and promoted for replication. The services and interventions 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.</td>
<td><strong>What:</strong> Integration of social housing and skills building components into the National Care Leavers Programme, led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The services and interventions will aim at complementing the already existing individualized support to care leavers to further support them in their school-to-work transition and housing autonomy. The intervention will include a mapping of good practices, support to local social services, capacity building activities and potentially direct support to care leavers.</td>
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<td><strong>Where:</strong> Sicily, Latium, Lombardy and Veneto and other locations to be defined</td>
<td><strong>Where:</strong> Sicily, Emilia Romagna, Latium and other locations to be defined</td>
<td><strong>Where:</strong> Sicily, Latium, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Campania</td>
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<td><strong>Progress:</strong> Activities for the diversification of foster care placement ongoing and training curriculum developed. Good practices to be documented being selected together with institutional counterparts.</td>
<td><strong>Progress:</strong> Implementing partners identified through an open call. Discussions on how to integrate the housing component within the national systems ongoing.</td>
<td><strong>Progress:</strong> Geographical scope defined, and preparatory activities conducted.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Integrated skills development</th>
<th>Innovative family support service</th>
<th>Contrasting educational poverty</th>
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<td><strong>What:</strong> 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 &amp; Creativity Camps will generate ideas from adolescents on how to address community problems, which will then be supported through a 6-module programme delivered by trained teachers or a 12-week incubation course with business incubation experts and mentors. To complement, the Mygrants platform will enhance their hard and soft skills and support work internships and job matching.</td>
<td><strong>What:</strong> A model of peer support between families with a specific focus on children with disability and educational poverty will be introduced as part of the innovative Support Centres for Families. The intervention includes the development of a model of services, its pilot, monitoring and systematization for a potential nationwide scale-up.</td>
<td><strong>What:</strong> Identification of promising State-financed interventions to counter educational poverty. The intervention aims at identifying currently implemented promising practices to be monitored, analysed and systematized for their potential replication and scale up.</td>
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<td><strong>Where:</strong> Sicily, Latium and Lombardy</td>
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<td><strong>Progress:</strong> 13 digitized Innovation &amp; Creativity Camps have been implemented online in upper secondary schools involving over 1400 students in Milan and Palermo. Over 650 students are continuing onto a second phase of UPSHIFT (Ideas in Action and/or Incubation) to further develop their ideas.</td>
<td><strong>Progress:</strong> Discussions to define the specific methodology of service and the geographical scope ongoing.</td>
<td><strong>Progress:</strong> Discussions to define modality of identification and analysis ongoing</td>
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ITALY
A NEW PLACE TO CALL HOME FOR MAMAJANG

Mamajang came to Italy from Gambia for two reasons, the first was economic and the second was fear of the conflict. In 2020 nearly 5,000 unaccompanied and separated children escaped their homeland to arrive in Italy by boat. Mamajang’s goal was to arrive somewhere where he could have a better future. The European Child Guarantee pilot project in Italy is piloting a foster family programme to support the inclusion of young migrants by providing them with a safe family environment. As Mamajang shares, “there’s a big difference between living in a reception center and with a family. When you’re in the center you do what you want because there are many people and the support is not just for you but for everyone, no one controls you or tells you what to do, you do what you want and when you’re 18 you leave. Here instead they make you feel at home, you go to school you feel protected they really help you.” For his foster mother, Desjë, the arrival of Mamajang was not just opening the doors of their house and giving him a bed. The boy also asked them to open the doors to their hearts. A social worker is supporting Mamajang and the foster family in this journey serving as a tutor to him and help him maintain a network of relationships that encourages his integration within the area. Mamajang has a strong relationship with his foster grandma, who he really trusts. He asks for her advice and she confirms, “It’s true. I love him. I tell him to drive safely when he drives his motorbike and to pay attention when he crosses the road. For me he’s like a son.”
Child Guarantee National Action Plans

Deep Dive Analysis

Deep Dive Analysis provide the information that has been requested by the European Commission in the Child Guarantee National Action Plans. One of the main aspects requested by the Commission in these plans are data to map out the number of children that need services, and indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the European Child Guarantee. They also generate knowledge on what has determined the success of interventions and policies to advise governments on possible measures for implementing the European Child Guarantee, including at regional and local level. 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 Child Guarantee National Action Plans on child poverty and social exclusion. All Deep Dive Analysis will be carried out by the end of Q3 2021.

Child Guarantee Steering Committee

Member States will be driving the process for the development of evidence-based and informed, costed and monitorable Child Guarantee National Action Plans.

Steering mechanisms have been established in all countries, with the government at the helm to lead the 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 Dive Analysis (see previous section), and that they are participatory and have sound monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Updates from the 7 Member States on Deep Dive Analysis and Coordination Mechanisms

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Deep Dive Analysis</th>
<th>Child Guarantee Steering Committee</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>The emphasis is 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 drivers and underlying causes of child poverty are also being examined.</td>
<td>The National Child Guarantee Steering Committee has been established following a memorandum of understanding signed between UNICEF, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, other key line ministries, the Council of Ministers, and the three pilot district administrations. It is tasked to provide overall guidance and support to the implementation of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee. The first meeting of the National Child Guarantee Steering Committee was held on 31 March 2021, chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy and which approved the Annual Work Plan for the implementation of the pilot Child Guarantee project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Deep Dive Analysis</td>
<td>Child Guarantee Steering Committee</td>
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<td>Croatia</td>
<td>The Deep Dive Analysis 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 and social exclusion.</td>
<td>The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy co-chairs the National Child Guarantee Steering 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. First Child Guarantee Steering Committee meeting was held on 18th of February 2021 and the second took place on 25th of May 2021 to discuss the findings from the literature review as part of the Deep Dive Analysis.</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
<td>A topic of particular interest for the Deep Dive Analysis in Greece is bringing together evidence on child poverty and social exclusion in the effort to inform a Child Guarantee National Action Plan. The work with the research institution has started in April.</td>
<td>The Child Guarantee Steering Committee 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.</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>The Deep Dive Analysis in Italy will include a particular focus on access to key rights, i.e education, ECEC, housing, healthcare and nutrition. It will also define the institutional, financial and monitoring frameworks that will allow interventions to break barriers to the access to social services for disadvantaged children. The Deep Dive Analysis will cover public policies at the different levels of administration, migration- and disability- focused policies, among others and it will include a gender perspective.</td>
<td>An inter-institutional Child Guarantee Steering Committee has been established and 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 is to lead and oversee the testing of the European Child Guarantee in Italy.</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>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 work has started in May and will be finalized in September.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>The Deep Dive Analysis in Lithuania will have a broad scope and will be looking at all target groups of disadvantaged 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. Work with the contractors started in May.</td>
<td>The Child Guarantee 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 Child Guarantee National Action Plan for the Child Guarantee, based on the findings from the Deep Dive Analysis.</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>The Deep Dive Analysis includes 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 disadvantaged children, analysis of social protection systems and bring together available data most relevant for the monitoring and evaluation of the European Child Guarantee. Its findings will inform the development of the Child Guarantee National Action Plan. The Deep Dive Analysis will be finalized in July 2021.</td>
<td>The deep dive Management Committee includes the office of the High Commissioner Against Child Poverty, Ministry of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda, UNICEF ECARO and UNICEF Spain. A Steering Committee representing all relevant ministries, local authorities, representatives of Catalonia and Valencia, a representative of the ESF+ management unit and the secretary of territorial cooperation has been set up to guide and validate the Deep Dive Analysis. The first meeting took place on the 27th of April and focused on the presentation of the first Deep Dive Analysis deliverable.</td>
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Evidence generation and analysis

In addition to the Deep Dive Analysis described above, 2 more activities related to evidence generation underpin Phase III of the European Child Guarantee:

A systematic literature review, which consists of a literature review that uses systematic and reproducible methods to identify, select and critically assess evidence. The aim of the systematic literature review is to contribute to evidence generation and analysis of existing national policies understanding the enabling and hindering factors cooperation and integration of actions across the five thematic areas of the European Child Guarantee listed above. It will consider various dimensions including governance, policy, legal, budgeting and services. Some of the factors influencing service integration and cooperation identified in previous literature are the resources allocated to it, the leadership of management, the level of clarify of job responsibilities, communication and cooperation workflows, and creating trust and common understanding. **The final results of the systematic literature review will be available in September 2021.**

An operational research, which 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 children affected by poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Theories of change are developed for each model of services and interventions, and contexts are mapped, and stakeholder inception meetings are ongoing.

**Systematic literature review:**
“The analysis will involve a search and review of academic peer-reviewed literature and other high-quality outputs in grey literature published in English and in as many other EU languages as possible. The analysis will aim to bring together in an accessible form the best evaluative evidence on integrated approaches to meeting the needs of children across the full age range of childhood from 0 to 18 years old.”

**Operational research:**
“Building evidence on ‘how things work’ in different contexts for the 6 disadvantaged groups of children, generating generalizable evidence and feeding this back directly to practitioners.”
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 processes. They are participating in Child Guarantee Steering Committees which are set up to oversee the implementation of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee including the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Child Guarantee National Action Plans.

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

BULGARIA
UNICEF has engaged the National Network for Children (NNC), an umbrella organization of 150 NGOs working with and for children, as well as a member of Eurochild. The NNC selected three local NGOs in the pilot districts who have experience in working with children and young people from disadvantaged groups. The local partners identified 18 adolescents (10 girls and 8 boys, aged between 12 and 17 years) who will conduct their own research on the main topics of the European Child Guarantee with support of 6 mentors. A 5-day online introductory training with all adolescents and mentors was conducted in February. The 3 local teams have already started their research on the first topic – access to quality health services. In parallel, UNICEF and NNC has initiated the preparation of the first national consultation with young people through U-Report, which will be on the same topic and will be conducted in May 2021.

GREECE
A dedicated Technical Working Group will review child and youth 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 deinstitutionalisation action plan by bringing the results of consultations in the deinstitutionalisation conference.

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.

Child Participation in:
- Evidence generation
- Policy Making
- Decision-making
- Service Design and Delivery
- Case management
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Advocacy and Communication
Cross-Cutting: Advocacy and Communications

Digital Activation around European Social Summit

In support of the European Child Guarantee, UNICEF ECARO together with the European Commission (DG EMPL), launched a digital campaign around the EU Social Summit. The campaign brought together EU Heads of State, EU institutions, social partners and other key stakeholders to Porto on 7-8 May 2021 under the Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. The Social Summit’s focus was on how to strengthen Europe’s social dimension with an inclusive, sustainable, just and jobs-rich recovery, based on a competitive economy and that leaves no one behind.

The purpose of the digital activation was to leverage the EU Social Summit as an opportunity to influence the decision-makers of EU Member States to prioritise reducing child poverty and social exclusion of children in their policy agendas, with particular focus on their recovery and resilience plans, framed by an increased EU focus on investing in children to break the cycle of poverty and social exclusion. The campaign was able to reach approximately 6.2 Million people on social media sharing key messages around the investment case for children and culminated in a Porto Social Commitment of promoting a comprehensive approach to lift children out poverty by prioritising funding for children’s rights and by mainstreaming the EU Child Guarantee across all policy sectors while boosting investment in sustainable jobs and social support for their parents. The activation engaged numerous decision makers including the President of the European Parliament, European Commissioners, Vice Presidents, National Ministers and various national and sub-national authorities across EU Member States, and the messages were echoed by various official governmental social media accounts across pilot and EU countries as well as by several National Ambassadors.

High Level Event on European Child Guarantee

On 10 June 2021 a high-level event entitled, Making the European Child Guarantee a Reality Insights from testing the European Child Guarantee, In coordination with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of European Union, will take stock of how the pilot has progressed to date in the pilot countries to inspire all Member States in their future implementation of the European Child Guarantee once the Council Recommendation is adopted. It will provide an opportunity to share experiences and give concrete examples of good practices, models and services that are proving successful in supporting children in need and addressing child poverty and social exclusion.

The high-level event is organised jointly by the UNICEF ECARO, the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.

The event will consist of a panel discussion of ministers in charge of social affairs from Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Spain. The event will also be joined by the Vice President of the European Commission, Dubravka Šuica, Portugal’s Minister for Employment, Solidarity, and Social Security Ms. Ana Mendes Godinho, European Parliament President, Mr. David Sassoli, UNICEF’s Director for Europe and Central Asia Region, Ms. Afshan Khan and the European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Mr. Nicolas Schmit.