Phase III of the European Child Guarantee:

We have entered the last mile of the partnership between UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) and the European Commission to pilot the ECG as part of the Phase III of the preparatory action of the ECG across seven Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, and Spain. We are pleased to share with you through this Programmatic Update the most important highlights of the progress so far, focusing on the period April-October 2022.
The Main Results of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee are:

1. **Supporting governments in developing European Child Guarantee National Action Plans** to address child poverty and social exclusion of children based on a comprehensive policy and programme deep dive analysis.

2. **Pilot and assess innovative and evidenced-based models of services and interventions** focused on some of the most disadvantaged children as well as concrete strategies to reach the most vulnerable children.

3. **Inform the implementation of the EU-wide Child Guarantee** through recommendations and lessons learnt from all the different activities in the pilot experience of Phase III.

To learn more about the pilot projects in the 7 countries participating in the Phase III of the Preparatory Action for the ECG, click [HERE](#).
UNICEF Support to the development of European Child Guarantee National Action Plans (ECG NAP)

ECG NAPs have been developed in six pilot Member States under the leadership of ECG National Coordinators or other designated actors. UNICEF together with the governments has worked to ensure that these plans are based on robust evidence and rely on the findings and recommendations of the Deep Dive analyses undertaken in each country, and that they are participatory and have sound monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

In the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, most of the countries are adapting their national action plans to include measures to address the basic need for protection and access to services for refugee children from Ukraine.

By the time this Programmatic Update was drafted, the ECG NAPs for Croatia, Greece, Italy and Spain were submitted to the European Commission.
Bulgaria

The Deep Dive analysis has been reviewed by line ministries which have provided their feedback and has been used extensively to inform the drafting of the ECG NAP. The NAP is expected to be a comprehensive document based on the vision of the government to consolidate in one place all the sectoral policies covered by the Child Guarantee, as well as other areas such as social protection measures and social services. To inform the work of the Working Group, technical guidance and capacity-building support was provided such as a ‘Brief M&E Guidance Note’, prepared by UNICEF ECARO, a proposal for key actions to be included in the NAP, a draft M&E Framework, consultative meetings with some key NGO networks, technical webinars covering the five thematic areas of the ECG.

The NAP development process has been delayed due to the decision of the Government to expand its scope and to include specific measures and interventions targeted at refugee families and children from Ukraine. The NAP will be published for public consultation as per national legislation. The draft NAP was developed by an inter-institutional Working Group, chaired by the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy & National Coordinator for the ECG and including more than 60 members – representatives of national institution and agencies, local authorities, civil society organisations, private sector associations, trade unions, academia, UNICEF and UNHCR. In October 2022, a final version of the NAP was discussed and approved by the National Council on Social Inclusion, the National Council on Child Protection and the National Child Council at the State Agency for Child Protection and submitted for approval by the Council of Ministers. Bulgaria will monitor and coordinate the implementation of the ECG NAP through an inter-institutional working group at a political level, chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and involving all key line ministries and institutions, which will be complemented by a permanent expert group to provide technical support and monitor its implementation.

Croatia

UNICEF Croatia is a member of the Working Group set up for the development of the NAP, together with more than 20 other governmental institutions and key stakeholders and it has supported consultations with children and young people, which were conducted in several related phases.

An advanced draft has been submitted to the European Commission. Pending further consultations of stakeholders and the public consultation, the NAP is expected to be formally adopted by the government. While the draft NAP contains a monitoring framework, UNICEF will further support the National Coordinator and working group to further advance this framework.

Germany

The Deep Dive analysis has been informing the discussions around the NAP. The Deep Dive analysis has been shared with the Commission since January 2022 and has led to a dialogue on recommendations and envisaged measures. The Deep Dive analysis has been welcomed and its main results have been considered as a basis for the first draft of the NAP. The German Government is currently developing their National Action Plan, led by the Ministry for Family Affairs working together with the other relevant Ministries. At the moment both drafting and consultations are taking place. Consultations are being implemented by the Deutsches Jugendinstitut (German Youth Institute), that is supporting the process. Consultations include a request for written input directed at both government actors and civil society, various events with relevant stakeholders and consultations with children. UNICEF Germany as well as civil society have been involved at different points in the process so far.

Greece

Greece has established a Working Group comprised of representatives from 12 key Ministries1 to work on the development of the NAP and provide inputs including new measures, recommendations, and key actions.

Under the leadership of the National Coordinator for the ECG, EKKA, inputs were requested from a variety of stakeholders: local, regional government, independent authorities, and civil society. UNICEF supported the task force established to draft the NAP monitoring framework in line with the recommendations of the Deep Dive analysis. Upon the request by the MoLSA, UNICEF has been supporting the drafting process with technical expertise, support to develop the monitoring and evaluation framework, as well as ensuring that children's voices are taken into account. In October the first 4 young people were placed in Supported Independent Living (SIL).

The final CG NAP, following the review by the Deputy Minister, was submitted to the EU Commission on 20th September 2022.

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### Italy

A drafting Commission was established in December 2021, to draft the NAP comprised of key line Ministries, UNICEF, civil society organisations, local authorities and academia. In March 2022 the ECG NAP was submitted to the European Commission and in September 2022, it was formally adopted for dissemination. Additionally, UNICEF provided technical support to the National Coordinator in the review of the NAP in view of its future dissemination, recommended areas for prioritization based on the Deep Dive’s findings and also undertook a swift analysis with other countries to compare priority themes and foster knowledge exchange and mutual learning. UNICEF will continue to work closely with the National Coordinator to support work in relation to child participation, mental health, competency-based education, and disability, amongst others recognized as priority programming areas.

To promote the dissemination of the findings of the Deep Dive and the content of the National CG Action Plan, UNICEF together with the National CG Coordinator and relevant Ministries is organising thematic webinars on some of the main topics related to the Child Guarantee in Italy, namely education, mental health, alternative care, participation and multidimensional poverty. As part of the dissemination strategy, UNICEF is holding public presentations of the main results of the research, and in particular those that informed the EGC NAP, with local governments and relevant stakeholders.

The Youth Advocacy Board (YAB) was consulted in February and a participatory process on the main challenges of ECG was carried out through a survey and an ad hoc meeting in December, January, and February. Moreover, in June 2022, the YAB was consulted by the National Coordinator on areas of focus and support amongst the implementation priorities selected by the government.

The draft of NAP has been presented at the National Observatory on childhood and adolescence, which is under the presidency of the Council of Ministers. Italy intends to submit an advanced draft to the Commission for their review, after which another round of consultations will follow.

### Lithuania

The draft ECG NAP has been presented to the National Child Welfare Council under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, chaired by the Minister of Social Security and Labour. This Council is expected to endorse the final NAP, once finalized. It is expected that the NAP will be formally approved via a Ministerial decision. The Council is also the body in charge of the monitoring the implementation and serving as a platform for its coordination. In addition, the Parliament will also play an oversight role through its Human Rights and Social Affairs and Labour Committees.

The final draft NAP will be translated in a child-friendly language and consulted with children so that their voices are reflected in the plan. Children will be involved through the newly established Child Council under the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Agency. The participation of the children from the ECG target groups is prioritized for this exercise.

### Spain

The drafting of the ECG NAP was led by the ECG Management committee, which includes the General Directorate for Children Rights, High Commissioner on Child Poverty, and UNICEF. The results of the Deep Dive were used extensively in the elaboration of the ECG NAP in Spain, especially in the analysis of the different key services and objectives concerning different groups of children in need, the definition of areas for action, objectives and measures, and the choice of indicators for goals and objectives.

The consultation process for the ECG NAP with the public and relevant stakeholders, has been organized in parallel with its drafting. The process of consultation with children has also been organized in parallel, including the development of a child-friendly version of the NAP and the organization of several consultation meetings with children of various backgrounds and age groups in the framework of National Council for Child Participation. The draft will be submitted for approval to the Council of Ministers, and before that the relevant Ministries will review and scrutinize their measures. Spain has submitted an advanced draft for European Commission comments, but the final NAP will not be submitted before the final approval by the Spanish government.
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, 18 evidenced-based and sustainable models of services and interventions for children from disadvantaged backgrounds are being implemented and tested for replicability. The implementation of all models of services has continued in coordination and agreement with national and sub-national authorities and institutions, through carefully designed plans and agreements, overseen by the coordination mechanisms at national and local level.

Figure shows the key results for the first year of implementation of the Phase III of the European Child Guarantee

**Technical guidance and tools** developed to support partners at national and subnational level.

- **2,758** professionals and decision-makers capacitated to plan, provide, and monitor quality ECG services and interventions for children and young adults.
- **13,414** children and young adults directly reached with services and interventions across 4 countries.
- **9,316** adult caregivers were directly reached with models of services and interventions across all four countries since the start of the project.
In **Bulgaria** the interventions in the framework of Phase III of the ECG 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.

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

### 3 target groups
- Children with disabilities;
- Children in precarious family situations
- Children with a minority racial or ethnic background (particularly Roma)

### 3 Districts
- Burgas
- Sliven
- Stara Zagora

--> 10 Municipalities
### 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 situations and children with disabilities. Support is tailored to the specific needs of families and children and includes referral to other services (social, educational, and health).

**Where:** All four municipalities Sliven district: Sliven, Nova Zagora, Kotel and Tvarditsa

**Progress:**
- **48% of children (0-3 years) covered by the home visiting service** in Sliven district
- **3515 families with 4320 children** (0-3 years) received individualised support, including 687 families and 1433 children in precarious family situations
- **654 children** were referred to specialists,
- **1050 pregnant women (of which 610 in precarious situation)** received access to prenatal care
- **20599 home visits conducted** including **3251 phone consultations**.

### Early childhood interventions

**What:** Early childhood intervention (ECI) services for families with young children with disabilities and developmental difficulties. This model ensures families with young children with developmental difficulties and disabilities, receive timely and quality family-centred support through integrated ECI services in three pilot municipalities where specialists from health, education, and social services work together in a systemic way.

**Where:** 3 municipalities: Chirpan, Sliven and Stara Zagora

**Progress:**
- **207 parents** and **168 children** reached by ECI teams, out of which 85 parents and 72 children received intensive support
- **77 children (0-3) with disabilities** referred to ECI services (of which 34 recruited by the ECI teams or self-referred)
- **41 staff** of the ECI services completed intensive training programme
- **99 specialists** trained to conduct development screening
- **150 people** participated in workshops for parents on ECI
- **70% of the healthcare staff and 100% of the health professionals** in nurseries trained

### Inclusive Pre-Primary Education

**What:** 30 pilot kindergartens provide quality inclusive pre-school education services for children with disabilities and learning difficulties. The capacities of 30 pilot kindergartens in 10 municipalities strengthened to provide quality inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities and special learning needs, and to engage effectively with parents

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

**Progress:**
- **6,614 children**, including **193 children with disabilities and special learning needs**, in **30 kindergartens**, supported with access to improved inclusive pre-school education
- **2,691 parents** engaged
- **489 kindergarten staff** trained
- **45 additional specialists**-hired
- **30 kindergartens** have improved inclusive environments
- **65 staff from 3 RCSPIE** completed specialized trainings
- Methodological guide for screening test for children (3 – 3.5 years) drafted
- National quality ECEC framework tested by 10 pilot kindergartens
Integrated child protection and family support

What: Children in precarious family situations and their families have access to integrated child and family-centred support services that address their specific vulnerabilities and prevent child-family separation. This intervention aims to improve the quality and strengthen the prevention capacities of existing family support social services by establishing mobile teams for outreach support to children and families in precarious situations with a focus on marginalized Roma communities in 7 pilot municipalities.

Where: 7 municipalities in three pilot districts Burgas, Sliven, and Stara Zagora

Progress:

- **2,996 children and 2,183 parents** in vulnerable situations provided with support, including intense case work with 626 children and 403 parents
- **697 children** provided access to education and healthcare
- **730 parents** provided access to social benefits and other services
- **7 mobile teams with 22 newly hired social workers** and assistants established
- **97 social workers and assistants** provided with intensive training
- **11 additional social workers in 10 CPDs** and trained
- **606 cases** opened in CPDs: 145 multidisciplinary coordination meetings

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BULGARIA
Silvia confidently takes her first steps towards a new life.

The mobile team at the Community Support Centre (CSC) in Burgas (Bulgaria), working within the framework of the ECG Pilot Project, has consistently stood by the three-year-old girl and her family for eighteen months now.

She can already walk and is stepping on the tiles at the front of door of her family’s little house. All the others – her mother, her grandmother and her brothers – are looking on, barely breathing, for fear she might tumble. They start cheering her on and encouraging her to take another and yet another step.

These are the first independent steps, timid and difficult as they are, of three-year-old Silvia from the Roma community of the Meden Rudnik neighbourhood in Burgas. The young girl diagnosed with cerebral palsy is making these steps after almost eighteen months of examinations, support, help and rehabilitation provided thanks to the mobile team at the CSC in Burgas.

“We visit the family quite often. We monitor Silvia’s development, and we also track the way her mother Zyumbyula copes with it, whether she needs some additional help, and how her brothers are doing, if they are going to school or to kindergarten. Silvia has a younger brother, so we monitor his development too”, says Katya, a social assistant on the mobile team. She and Aygul, the other social worker on the team, are always there with the family during the rehabilitation sessions for Silvia, which she and her mother go to twice a week at the CSC.

The team recruited under the ECG Pilot Project in Bulgaria was the first to conduct a home visit to Silvia’s family in April 2021. Since then, they have always stood by the little girl. Prior to the intervention of the social workers from the CSC, Silvia had never seen a doctor or another specialist and nobody in her family knew how to help and support her to walk and develop on an equal footing with her peers.

The pilot ECG project, provides for the establishment of mobile teams of social services to support vulnerable families within the community, as close to the people as possible. They visit areas and communities that are not within the reach of other services. Their aim is to identify the needs and support families in overcoming their problems by facilitating access to various local and central government institutions, healthcare services, educational establishments, social services, etc.

Learn more about Silvia’s story here.
In Croatia the specific interventions in the framework of Phase III of the ECG pay particular attention to early identification of boys and girls, and their families who live in particularly deprived environments, face specific disadvantages and for which early intervention is crucial to break the cycle of disadvantage and provide them with opportunities for developing at their maximum potential. These models of services aim to improve the living conditions and increase access and use of integrated services for children living in precarious situations such as families living in poor households, Roma children and families and children with disabilities in the Medjimurje County in Croatia.
### Child protection and family-support services

**What:** Integrated child protection and family support services aiming to ensure early identification of girls, boys and their families who live in precarious and deprived environments and promotes accessible, high-quality, timely and appropriate family support and child protection interventions, that include outreach services in communities at the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion. It is implemented through the partnership with the two Centres for Social Welfare in Medjimurje County, (Prelog and Čakovec).

**Where:** Medjimurje County

**Progress:**
- 485 children benefitted from the programme
- 585 parents acquired new parenting knowledge and skills
- 55 educational and social welfare professionals acquired knowledge and skills to conduct parenting support programmes
- 58 experts from social welfare centres trained on multicultural perspective in social work and case management
- 34 family outreach workers trained on effective family interventions
- 138 experts trained on effective and qualitative cross-sectoral and inter-disciplinary cooperation
- 7 cross-sectoral and inter-disciplinary teams established and are functional.

### 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 includes strengthening capacities of pre-primary education professionals and parents, establishment of new facilities, and development of a regulatory framework for local government.

**Where:** Medjimurje Country

**Progress:**
- 98 parents and caregivers supported
- Over 300 of the most educationally-at-risk children and their families have been supported in their readiness for kindergarten, preschool or primary school
- 3 Roma facilitators and 3 professional educators continued to work with children in the 3 Play Hubs.
- 121 teachers from 5 kindergartens trained to improve inclusion in their practice
- A tool to plan the cost of kindergarten per child has been developed, tested, and shared with Medjimurje communities and the Ministry of Science and Education.

### Early childhood interventions

**What:** Young children (0-7) with or at risk of developmental delays and those with disabilities and their families 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 ECI services, strengthened knowledge and skills of health, education and social protection professionals, parenting support and improved data collection.

**Where:** Medjimurje County

**Progress:**
- 813 children and 781 caregivers/parents have been directly reached, of which 294 received intensive support, while 1,069 children and 612 caregivers/parents were reached indirectly
- 2892 services/counselling to children and parents/caregivers by 1 ECD/ECI outreach team
- 49 health care and other professionals completed a total of 186 online self-paced training modules
- 29 preschool teachers sensitized on early childhood detection and intervention
- 1 online course on fundamentals of ECI made available on the UNICEF learning platform AGORA².

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² [https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=30674](https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=30674)
Local level Coordination

Establishment of 5 community resource centres, centres for children and families:

One community resource centre in the Municipality Pribislavec has been equipped and construction of 4 in municipalities Orehoćica, Mala Subotica, Potočan and Nedelišće are expected by the end of November.

Coordination:

The Programme Implementation Committee for Medjimurje County has been established and has met in person three times (in February, May, and November 2021). During 2022 regular bilateral meetings as well as coordination meetings of municipalities where community resource centres will be established have been organized.

CROATIA

PlayHubs provide student teachers with hands on experience for promoting early inclusion

“This teaching practice is different from everything students have learned so far!”

Teaching practice in informal setting of Play Hubs is a part of the EU Child Guarantee pilot-programme

As of this summer, second- and third-year students of early and preschool education at the Faculty of Teacher Education, Čakovec branch, are carrying out part of their teaching practice in the informal setting of Play Hubs. In addition to gaining experience in a formal environment such as kindergartens, students now take part in a one-day teaching practice in Play Hubs, where most children become involved in an informal preschool education for the first time.

First impressions by students, as well as children and parents, are extremely positive. Most would like this segment of their teaching practice to be extended, as the students with whom we spent the day in Play Hub in Kuršanec shared.

“This teaching practice is different from everything students have learned so far,” said Adrijana Višnjić Jevtić, Phd, Faculty of Teacher Education. “This is different. Here we meet children who quite possibly coming to organized settings for the first time so it may be a little more demanding, but at the same time it gives the students wider experience. In Play Hubs students met children who come from a different background, and this helps them in developing their competencies. This kind of practice prepares students to meet the population that they usually do not meet in formal educational institutions, so it is an added value to their education,” explains Višnjić Jevtić.

“We try to integrate as many motor, mental, and physical activities as possible into play as we wish them to develop like children who attend kindergarten. The most interesting part were their reactions when they saw us for the first time and when we began getting to know them. They were very open, and clearly stated their wishes, such as “you are going to play with me” “I want to do her make-up” and “let him read to me”. I hope this teaching practice will bring us a lot of valuable experience,” says Anamarija who adds that, together with other students, she noticed significant improvement in her approach after completing her practice in Play Hubs.

Learn more about this story here.
In Greece the interventions in the framework of Phase III of the ECG pay particular attention to the needs of children without parental care, including non-Greek migrant children and aim to build solid evidence, practice, and an operational base to inform the national deinstitutionalisation reform which takes stock of the best practices developed by UNICEF and its partners in the framework of the migrant response in Greece. The other two models of service address skills building for young people and inclusive school education.
### Deinstitutionalisation

**What:** Support national authorities to develop a clear national De-institutionalisation strategy and support the local authorities in the region of Attica to facilitate deinstitutionalisation and identify alternative care options for vulnerable children. Strengthening a gatekeeping system and the capacities of the social workforce are key elements of this approach.

**Where:** National / Attica region

**Progress:**
- **306 children** have been supported: **176 children and young persons living in residential institutions** had their individual DI plans developed, and **161 children at risk** have been supported through the intervention of the hands-on team in social services
- **47 staff of residential care institutions** undergoing re-skilling trainings
- **273 social workers** from **51 municipalities** in Attika Region trained in early identification and case management

### Foster care

**What:** Support for the development of the national Foster Care System to enable an effective national foster care operational framework through the evaluation, training, and support of potential and registered foster families in all stages of foster care. In addition, foster care programs piloted in the Region of Attica with a view to scale them up nationally.

**Where:** Attica region

**Progress:**
- **109 children** have benefited, 9 children returned to their biological family, 24 children supported during the foster care placement
- **28 professionals** working in childcare institutions capacitated to support foster care
- **97 foster parents/potential foster parents** supported throughout the different stages of fostering
- A protocol has been developed by the sub working group to support the professionals working with foster carers and children

### 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, 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:**
- **Report** with the analysis of the **14 FGDs and 5 key informant interviews** and recommendations.
- **1 Ministerial Decision** for the pilot EU CG program, issued in May 2022 enabling the implementation of the SIL pilot project no 41843/11-5-2022, B’2313
- **1 draft Joint Ministerial Decision** that will ensure the implementation of the national SIL program which is still pending
- **4 Individual transition plans** for the first 4 beneficiaries have been developed for in collaboration with the social services of the institutions.
Integrated skills development

**What:** Access to skills development and opportunities for social and economic inclusion of young people - to support adolescents and young people in challenging living conditions, to benefit from better employment or entrepreneurship opportunities and become engaged members of civil society.

**Where:** Attica region

**Progress:**
- **100 young people** interviewed to outline their profile
- **429 adolescents and young people** participated in vocational guidance sessions and job orientation sessions
- **377 adolescents and young people** (among them 122 young people with disabilities) supported to develop entrepreneurial skills
- **107 young people** participated in skills development program including 30 young Roma
- **11 young people** participated in job experience acquisition program
- **2 social enterprises** by young people with disabilities established and approved

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 includes a teacher capacity building programme, piloting the intervention in Attica region and a sensitisation campaign on the power and benefits of inclusive education.

**Where:** Attica region

**Progress:**
- **160 children** supported through individualized learning paths
- **460 professionals** trained on the principle of inclusive education, differentiated learning and the integration of social-emotional learning in everyday teaching practices
- **30 schools** supported with intra-school trainings and a mentorship scheme
- **Bottleneck analysis** on the implementation of an inclusive school in Greece finalised and validated.

Coordination

The **National Child Guarantee Steering Committee** (Co-chaired with MoLSA) includes both representatives of the central government as well as of local authorities and has met once. The Committee is complemented by technical groups aiming to inform the implementation of the models of services and results areas.
GREECE: Deinstitutionalization in Greece: Children in search of a home

Yanis*, 15 years old, is sitting alone on a sofa in the living room of the old but rather well-preserved estate, which is housing a children's residential care institution, somewhere in the Athenian suburbs. He is starting to play a video game when suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, a flock of young children raid the living room, running and shouting happily, calling to Yanis to quit the video game and play with them.

“This happens all the time,” says Yanis, who has lived in the institution since he was 6 years old, says. “When I play PlayStation, there are kids running around. I cannot concentrate, I would like to have my own space… Many kids come and go all the time in this institution.”

In Greece, almost 1,500 children are currently in institutional care. While foster care is internationally recognized as the best alternative for children who cannot live with their families, there are not enough foster families to look after the children currently living in institutions, even less so for children with special needs.

Melia* is 16 years old and has been living in an institution for children with special needs in the Attika region since she was 4 years old. She has made friends there, but she craves a sense of autonomy and self-reliance: “I would like to be in a home with Stella, Natalia, the other girls, to learn, to make up my daily schedule, to cook…and decide on which days to do these (things). For example, Monday, I will clean up and cook,” she says and adds: “I wish that all kids could go to families, and for none to be left here, so that the institution closes down.”

Under ECG pilot programme, UNICEF supports the Greek government in its efforts towards deinstitutionalization of children, by promoting community and family-based models of childcare, such as foster care. Within this framework, UNICEF, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, has designed and promoted the Supported Independent Living model for children and young people (15 years old and above) who are living in institutions, in an effort to enhance children’s independence and autonomy within the community.

*Names have been changed to ensure child protection. Read more here.
In Italy, the intervention in the framework of Phase III of the ECG aims to address the needs of children affected by migration and those without parental care, as well as children in precarious family situations, children with disabilities and children with mental health issues.
### Foster care

**What:** Foster care mainstreamed in the childcare system. This intervention aims to map and document promising practices in the provision of alternative care for out-of-home children, including specialized foster care practices, and design, test and integrate into the mainstream childcare system a model of foster care for unaccompanied and separated migrant (UASC) children and accompanied children with migration background whose families need a temporary support through foster care.

**Where:** Sicily, Latium, Lombardy and Veneto

**Progress:**
1) **58 migrant children** have been placed in foster care and are supported  
2) **1 interinstitutional working group** for the promotion of foster care for UASC established in the Municipality of Rome  
3) **2 MoUs** signed with the Municipality of Catania and with the Juvenile Court of Catania  
4) **1 methodological toolkit** for the foster care of UASC  
5) **Agreements** signed with the National Councils of Social Workers, Psychologists and Educators  
6) **Mapping of 12 alternative care promising practices** identified nationwide drafted  
7) **9 promising practices of specialized foster care** for children aged 0 to 6 for children with disability and of light foster care identified and being documented

### Integrated skills development

**What:** An integrated skills development package aims to improve young people’s employability and social inclusion and ensure their effective transition to adulthood. UNICEF’s flagship initiative UPSHIFT aims to empower marginalized adolescents to become social innovators. Innovation & Creativity Camps aim to generate ideas from adolescents on how to address community problems. Students are then supported through in-depth programmes delivered by trained teachers: a 20-hour programme and an 80-hour incubation phase during the following school year.

**Where:** Sicily, Latium, and Lombardy

**Progress:**
- **2,584 students** were involved in **24 “Innovation & Creativity Camps”**. Over 260 innovative social impact ideas were developed by the students. Of these, **957 students** completed the second phase “Ideas in Action for UPSHIFT”, while **193 students** completed the last incubation phase  
- **112 schoolteachers** trained on UPSHIFT XXI century skills building programme  
- **Around 1,000 students, 55 teachers and 160 mentors** demonstrated an increase in their XXI-century skills

### Social housing and skills building for care leavers

**What:** Integration of social housing and skills building components into the National Care Leavers Programme, led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The intervention aims at complementing the already existing individualized support to care leavers with support for school-to-work transition and housing autonomy. The intervention includes a mapping of good practices, support to local social services, capacity building activities and potentially direct support to care leavers.

**Where:** Sicily, Latium, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, and Campania

**Progress:**
8) **110 tutors and social workers** trained  
9) **1 mapping of promising practices** of social housing completed and validated  
10) **Handbook for the promotion of social housing for care leavers** and for the support in their transition to housing autonomy drafted, tested in 3 municipalities (Asti, Lucca and Atripalda) and currently under review for finalization.
**Innovative family support service**

**What:** Peer support for vulnerable families, including families with children with disabilities. The intervention includes mapping of services already offered by the Family Support Centres, focusing on promising peer-to-peer support between families, the development of a standardized methodology, followed by a testing in three selected Centres of a model for family peer support, which will include staff training and supervision.

**Where:** Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Latium, Marche, and Apulia

**Progress:**
- 70 Family Support Centres consulted in the initial mapping of peer-support initiatives
- Toolkit for Family Support Centres’ staff developed and validated
- Pilot phase initiated in the Family Support Centres, starting with the training of their staff on the toolkit (3 per Family Support Centre, for a total of 18 people) and implementation of the activities.

**Contrasting educational poverty**

**What:** Interventions to effectively counter educational poverty. The aim of the intervention is to monitor and document the most promising practices financed by the Department for Family Policies (through the Educare call for proposals), present them in a structured way and analyse their replicability and potential scale-up and inclusion in the ECG NAP.

**Where:** Veneto, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Latium, Campania

**Progress:**
- Research protocol and data collection tools developed and validated
- 9 promising practices selected (3 in the North of Italy, 3 in the Center and 3 in the South)
- Data collection phase conducted – a total of 30 focus groups and 18 direct interviews were conducted with the participation of 177 people
- Analysis and documentation phase completed with all 9 documentation reports developed and currently being reviewed.

The National Child Guarantee Steering Committee meets approximately on a monthly basis and includes representatives of both co-leading Ministries (the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for Family Policies), UNICEF, the European Commission (as observer) and more recently the CG National Coordinator.
Child participation is essential for reaching the most disadvantaged groups of children and is being integrated into all pillars of the Phase III. In line with the “Guidance on Child and Adolescent Participation as part of Phase III of the Preparatory Action for the ECG”, child and adolescent participation has been mainstreamed in the different activities of the Phase III of the preparatory action for the ECG: in evidence generation, policy/decision-making and service design and delivery, monitoring and evaluation as well as in advocacy and communication.

Bulgaria

Child participation has focused on evidence generation through child-led research and through U-Report consultations with young people to inform policymaking related to the development of the ECG NAP in partnership with National Network for Children. Three teams have been established in the pilot districts, consisting of 15 girls and boys between 13 and 18 years. In 2022, the three teams researched the topic of education, working on their presentations in a workshop in April 2022. The results were presented at a special panel at the annual meeting of the National Network for Children, held in June 2022. In addition, each team presented their findings at local venues in front of their peers and local stakeholder in several local events.
Croatia

UNICEF Croatia ensured extensive consultations with different groups of children and young people at the national level in the process of drafting the ECG NAP. The consultations with children and young people were carried out throughout several connected phases – through a pyramidal approach that enabled participation of a larger number of participants and ensured the possibility of participation to different groups of children and young people by respecting the principles of inclusion and fairness. Adolescents and young people – members of UNICEF’s boards, discussed proposed goals and priorities defined in the draft ECG NAP. After the consultations took place, the following activities were carried out: online survey through the ZABUM voice platform in which 183 participants between the age of 16 and 25 were able to give their opinion on vulnerable groups of children and young people in Croatia and problems they face; and consultations with 60 children and young people between the age of 12 and 25 through the UNICEF’s network of partners. The integrated and succinct opinions of children and young people were presented and shared with the Working Group set up for the development of the ECG NAP.

Greece

ECG Youth Steering Committee, comprised of children and young people from the target groups of the ECG, was established in May 2021 and has been meeting on a quarterly basis. UNICEF supported EKKA, the Greek National Coordinator, to establish mechanisms for child and youth participation by involving the members of ECG Youth Steering Committee and the Youth Advisory Panel of the Deputy Ombudswoman for Children's Rights, in all stages of the development of the NAP, including the development of child consultation methodology.

UNICEF in collaboration with the Deputy Ombudswoman for Children's Rights, organized two focus group discussions with 17 children and young adults, including children with disabilities, Roma children, and children living in institutions. The National Coordinator held six additional focus group discussions with children from the above groups. A questionnaire for 12–17-year-old children was developed by UNICEF and the Deputy Ombudswoman and shared with EKKA, who facilitated its dissemination in secondary level schools all around Greece. During the focus group discussions, UNICEF presented the themes that emerged from the Deep Dive research and the participants had the opportunity to express their opinions regarding the difficulties faced by children in accessing their basic rights as well as to provide suggestions and good practices on how to improve access to their rights.
Italy

The **Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** was established in collaboration with the government-led ECG Steering Committee, in line with the Government of Italy’s recently published National Guidelines for Child Participation. These Guidelines were drafted by the Intergroup for participation of the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence and UNICEF’s Guidance on Child and Adolescent Participation in the Child Guarantee. The YAB membership in Italy comprises 23 children and young people aged 14 to 21 years representing the ECG target groups of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including beneficiaries of the Phase III pilot models.

After a first constitutive meeting in December 2021, the YAB started working online in three subgroups (Administration, Communication and Thematic Issues) to develop two surveys on the ECG’s thematic priorities to be disseminated among their peers. Data and recommendations collected through these surveys were presented to the Working Group in charge of developing the Italian CGNAP and have been subsequently included in the Plan. The YAB met in June with the presence of the ECG National Coordinator, which was also an opportunity to provide YAB members with skills and tools to strengthen their communication activities, especially in the production of podcasts and the development of a social media strategy for the Instagram page created and managed by the Youth Advisory Board.

The third meeting is scheduled in December 2022. Going forward, YAB interventions aim at collecting and channelling the voice of children and adolescents living in Italy (via surveys and IG page) to ensure child participation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Italian CGNAP.

Spain

UNICEF has closely collaborated with the High Commissioner for the Fight against Child Poverty and the Secretary of State for Social Rights through the Directorate General for the Rights of Children and Adolescents to take children’s views and opinions into account in the Deep Dive process.

During the ECG NAP development, the participation of children and adolescents was channelled through meetings of the State Council of Participation of Children and Adolescents, where the draft NAP was presented. 12 boys and girls of different ages completed a pre-evaluation form of the NAP and shared their work and proposals through child-friendly work techniques (supported by the consultant La Maraña) which were collected to be considered. UNICEF supported with the preparation of the child-friendly version of the ECG NAP adapted to children and with drafting proposals to incorporate the main comments and proposals received from children. Two members of the State Council participated in the public presentation of the ECG NAP with the President of the Government in July 2022.

3 https://www.instagram.com/yabitalia/
Conferences & Exchange Platform for European Child Guarantee
National Coordinators Webinars:

Three thematic webinars have been organized from January 2022 – April 2022 with the aim of sharing practices and experiences from the 7 pilot countries. The webinars focused on themes stemming from the policies, services and interventions targeting the most disadvantaged groups of children and the development processes that are part of the pilot ECG Projects. The webinars aimed to share good practices and experiences from the pilot countries, showcase how pilot interventions support countries in fulfilling the ECG Recommendation and in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the ECG national action plans, and inform and inspire national coordinators and relevant government authorities from other countries on how to implement the ECG Recommendation and the ECG national action plans.

The webinars were organized in coordination with the European Commission, DGEMPL, in the framework of the Exchange Platform for European Child Guarantee National Coordinators. The conference series targets government partners, National Coordinators from the pilot countries and other EU Member States, implementing partners, across the EU and the Western Balkans.

Communications & Visibility

A series of new human interest stories and videos are featured in this programmatic update, and this content can be viewed on UNICEF ECARO’s European Child Guarantee Phase III webpage and all European Child Guarantee videos and events can be viewed here. Social media posts on the European Child Guarantee have been shared widely on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube UNICEF offices in Europe. All posts published natively by UNICEF local, regional, and global accounts have been viewed 5,300,000 times around the world. UNICEF partners, media and influencers added at least 47,900,000 impressions to an overall digital outreach. All posts published by UNICEF and partners have reached at least 53,200,000 users online.

European Child Guarantee Event Highlights

The following is a compilation of event highlights on twitter for key European Child Guarantee events, highlighting the voices and perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders from policymakers to children and young people engaged in the work of the Child Guarantee.

- Making the European Child Guarantee a Reality
- Social Inclusion of Roma Children
- Child and Adolescent Participation in the Child Guarantee
- Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities
- Early childhood education and care in the European Child Guarantee
- #EUChildGuarantee Conference in Prague, Czech Republic
- Conference “Building the Europe’s future: Implementing the European Child Guarantee”
The Operational Research (or process evaluation) 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. Phase 1 data collection has been completed. Phase 2 data collection will be conducted from September 2022 to February 2023.

Programmatic Updates on Phase III of the European Child Guarantee
The following Programmatic Updates on Phase III of the Preparatory Action to the Child Guarantee provide a snapshot and progress from March 2021 to November 2022 of the ongoing work in each of the 7 pilot countries, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, and Spain to test the European Child Guarantee.

- March 2021
- June 2021
- November 2021
- April 2022

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.”

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