Pilot testing
the EU Child Guarantee in Bulgaria
(Phase III of the Preparatory Action)
Objective and Scope of the Pilot Project

Three target groups

• Children with disabilities
• Children in precarious family situations
• Children with a minority racial or ethnic background (part. Roma)

Four interventions

- Home visiting and individualizes support to families with small children (0-3 years)
- A system approach to implementing early childhood intervention for families with young children with disabilities and developmental difficulties
- Quality inclusive pre-school education services for children with disabilities and learning difficulties
- Outreach child and family-centered preventive and support services (with a focus on children from families in precarious situation)
Results:

- Strengthened capacity of kindergartens to identify, assess and support children with disabilities and special needs by hiring additional support staff
- Improved screening for risks of developmental difficulties at age of 3
- Improved needs assessment and education support planning
- Improved transition “family – kindergarten – school”
- More effective engagement of parents
- Improved skills of professionals from kindergartens and Regional centers for supporting the process of inclusive education (RCPIE) on application of screening tools and on assistive technologies for alternative and augmentative communication
- Strengthened methodological role of RCPIE
- Documented promising inclusive practices and inclusive approaches to be mainstreamed at regional and national level
Inclusive pre-school education

30 kindergartens (KG) in 10 municipalities

Achievements:

• Multi-modular training program on inclusive education developed
• 426 pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff trained
• 44 additional specialists (speech therapists, psychologists, resource teachers) hired
• 6,152 children receiving inclusive pre-school education
• 13 KG developed projects for improving the inclusive environment
• 65 staff from 3 RCSPIEs trained
• 3 RCSPIEs conducted 30 methodological session with pedagogical staff from pilot KG

➢ 2022: pilot testing of Quality ECEC framework, developed by MES
Setting up a national quality framework on early childhood education and care (REFORM/SC2020/059)
Aims and outcomes of the project

Aim: to support the Bulgarian authorities in setting up a national quality framework for early childhood education and care.

- **Outcome 1:** The Bulgarian authorities have gained a better understanding of how they can improve quality in early childhood education and care by reviewing modes of governance and provision, developing effective tools and aligning relevant policies.

- **Outcome 2:** A National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care has been created, together with a set of related indicators and benchmarks. These tools are based on the European Quality Framework and have been tailored to the Bulgarian context through a broad consultative process.

- **Outcome 3:** The quality framework, indicators and benchmarks have been piloted in selected settings and promoted to a broad stakeholder audience. An Action plan for the implementation of the tools has been developed, including recommendations for a system of evaluation and monitoring of quality, as well as its alignment with reforms in related policy areas.
Main project milestones, deliverables and meetings/events

**STEP 1: Analysis**

- **D1**: Kick-off and work plan
  - Bulgarian Ministry, EC
- **D2**: Report on how to improve Bulgarian ECEC
  - Working Group, Steering Committee
- **D3**: Reviewing European good practices
  - Working Group, Steering Committee
- **D4**: Two study visits
  - Working Group, Steering Committee

**Outcome 1: Development of a better understanding of how to improve the quality of ECEC**

Outcome 1 aims to provide an assessment of the situation in Bulgaria and to draw upon European practices as a comparison point. The activities under stage 1 will provide the basis for the design of the draft Quality Framework.

**STEP 2: Co-creation of the National Quality Framework**

- **D5**: Summary report and stakeholder workshop
  - Working group and Stakeholder group (30), Steering Committee
- **D6**: Draft quality framework
  - Based on feedback from Working group and Stakeholder group, Steering Committee
- **D7**: Report from two stakeholder workshops
  - Stakeholder group (50x2), Steering Committee

**Outcome 2: Creation of a National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care with a set of related indicators and benchmarks**

Outcome 2 is key to the reform process. This Framework has to be strategic, manageable, capable of being implemented and aligned to the needs of the ECEC system. It has to cover all aspects of the European Quality Framework and take account of the European Commission’s expert group on ECEC indicators. However, it has to avoid unnecessary complexity and be clear about what is being measured by indicators of quality. As there are so many things which are proxy measures for the quality of provision, the challenge is to agree a Framework which inspires confidence at both the ECEC system and provider level. This process also acknowledges other existing efforts to build quality in ECEC in Bulgaria, such as the WHO Nurturing Care Framework and the Bulgarian ECD standards.

**STEP 3: Implementation and testing**

- **D8**: Piloting
  - Wider community = practitioners with the help of the Regional inspectorates, Steering Group, Working Group
- **D9**: Final quality framework
  - Steering Committee
- **D10**: Conference
  - Wider community 100 representatives, Steering group
- **D11**: Action Plan
  - Steering Committee, Working Group
- **D12**: Final report
  - Steering Committee

**Outcome 3: Pilot, promotion and creation of an action plan for implementation**

Outcome 3 aims to test the implementation of the framework, indicators and benchmarks. We will pilot and test the elements of the draft Quality Framework, which includes an element of stakeholder engagement, make changes in the light of the feedback and prepare an action plan for implementing a revised Framework. A final dissemination conference will support the promotion of the revised Framework and associated indicators and benchmarks.
The basis for the proposed national quality framework (NQF)

- discussions in five meetings of the working group
- agreement to cover the five dimensions in the European Quality Framework (EQF)
- advice from the Steering Committee
- two reports on ECEC - based on Bulgaria and other European countries
- the 2019 Council Recommendation on high quality ECEC
- the proposed indicators from the European group of ECEC experts in 2018
A proposed vision for ECEC

high quality early childhood education and care in Bulgaria supports all children’s well-being and their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. It is equally available and accessible to all children from birth to the age at which they start primary school. Every child in Bulgaria has the right to a high quality ECEC service which includes preparation for transition to a primary school. The national quality framework for ECEC builds on, and broadens the cooperation, experiences and achievements of nurseries, kindergartens and other ECEC settings including the support provided by the social service system.
any regulated arrangement which provides education and care for children from birth to the compulsory primary school age - regardless of the setting, funding, opening hours or programme content. This includes privately and publicly funded provision; pre-school and pre-primary provision.
Implementation

The national quality framework **would replace the existing arrangements for measuring the quality** of ECEC provision.

The national quality framework **would simplify the existing system and clarify the responsibilities and roles of each organisation** involved in the ECEC sector.

It requires individual ECEC providers, and local and national organisations to **collaborate and coordinate their measurement of the quality** of ECEC provision.