



EU Alliance for Investing in Childrenⁱ Questions to the Commissioner-designate for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion 2014-2019

Almost 27 million children in Europe are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. By hitting both employment and welfare systems, the financial and economic crisis that started in 2008 has severely affected children and their families across Europe. The number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe has increased substantially since then – with an increase of half a million children in only one year between 2011 and 2012. The EU is moving away from its Europe 2020 target set to reduce poverty – hence introducing a sub-target on reducing child poverty would be crucial.

However, poverty is not just about a lack of money. It is multi-dimensional and one of the principal causes of child rights violations in Europe. It does not simply mean that children's basic needs – such as food, clothes and adequate housing – might not be met. It is also linked to social exclusion and lack of access to services, including health care, childcare and high-quality education. In the case of children, it also includes not being able to participate in social and cultural activities with their peers. The effects of poverty and exclusion on children can last a lifetime and be carried on into future generations. Children growing up in poverty are less likely to acquire the skills and capabilities that will enable them to work their way out of poverty as adults and contribute to the overall well-being of society. Child poverty needs to be addressed from a child rights perspective and with a cross-sectorial approach. Investment in children and their families makes sense – economically, socially and politically. It is the only sustainable way of overcoming social and economic inequalities in the long term.

The European Commission's Recommendation "Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage" (COM 2013/778)¹ gives full recognition to that and provides guidance to Member States for designing and implementing policies in an integrated way across the pillars of 1) access to adequate resources; 2) access to quality services; and 3) the participation of children.

To make the guidance a reality for children Member States have to be accountable for policy reforms and the European Commission needs to show leadership through strong implementation measures.

- ***How will you support, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the European Commission's Recommendation to address child poverty "Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage"?***

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013H0112>

Europe is at a crossroads. The mid-term review of Europe 2020 offers an opportunity to re-focus hearts and minds on what matters most for Europe's political, social and economic future. The rights and well-being of children and young people need to be at the heart of political choices. Europe's present and future depend on it.

Europe 2020 needs to be strengthened to realise this goal. For example, a **sub-target on reducing child poverty** would make policies and investment in children a clear priority.

- ***How will you ensure that Europe 2020 makes a difference for children?***

The **social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union** should be strengthened, notably by using appropriate employment and social indicators within the European Semester. The scoreboard of employment and social indicators reflects some key social consequences of economic and fiscal policies. Important trends to watch in that regard were also identified by the Social Protection Performance Monitor, among them the high levels of child poverty, backing up the scoreboard.

There is a need to make social impact assessments part of the European Semester. If a binding mechanism were in place to ensure that preventive and corrective actions are triggered when excessive social imbalances are registered in the scoreboard, that could ensure macro-economic objectives do not prevent the realisation of social policy priorities but enable them.

- ***What initiatives will you take to make the social dimension and in particular the scoreboard of employment and social indicators a binding part of the Economic and Monetary Union?***

ⁱ The [EU Alliance for Investing in Children](http://ec.europa.eu/progress) is a temporary initiative developed in the framework of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS. This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields. The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-28, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

Partners of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children include:

- Alliance for Childhood
- ATD Quart Monde
- Caritas - Europa
- COFACE – Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union
- Dynamo International – Street Workers Network
- EAPN – European Anti-Poverty Network
- EASPD – European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities
- ELIANT Network
- ENSA – European Network of Social Authorities
- EPHA - European Public Health Alliance
- ESN – European Social Network
- Eurodiaconia
- Eurochild
- EuroHealthNet
- European Child Safety Alliance
- European Parents Association
- FEANTSA – European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless
- Intentional Step by Step Association
- Mental Health Europe
- PICUM – Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
- Save the Children EU Office
- SOS Children's Villages International
- UNICEF EU Office