

Statement by the EU Alliance for Investing in Children¹

Presented at the *'Investing in an inclusive and fair future for Europe. European Child Guarantee: from engagement to reality'* conference organised by the Belgian Presidency of the European Union on the 2nd of May.

In the last decade, the EU Alliance for Investing in Children has advocated for the full implementation of the 2013 [Investing in Children](#) Recommendation and for setting up an ambitious and robust European Child Guarantee. After years of fruitful cooperation with all the EU institutions represented here today, in 2021, we [welcomed the adoption](#) of the [European Child Guarantee Recommendation](#) as a historic framework to combat child poverty. Since then, the Alliance has been working on the implementation and monitoring of the Child Guarantee to positively impact every child living in poverty or social exclusion in the EU.

We firmly believe the EU's leadership, through ambitious policy and funding, can catalyse political commitment and policy reform at the national level, driving systemic change and improvements in the lives of children and young people across Europe.

We welcome the recent [La Hulpe Declaration's](#) commitments to reaching the Barcelona targets and recognising the importance of investing in universally accessible, affordable, high-quality childcare. We also fully concur with the emphasis on implementing and strengthening the European Child Guarantee. However, these laudable words risk proving empty without concrete and sustained action.

Child poverty is a longstanding crisis in the EU, a region where more than 20 million children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is one in four. This is unacceptable. Poverty affects every aspect of a child's life. While the situation differs from country to country, the results are always the same: children's rights are not respected, protected, or fulfilled.

In the last years, child poverty has been exacerbated and disproportionately affected vulnerable families and children. Covid lockdown measures, the cost-of-living crisis, compounded by ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises, have pushed more families into poverty and worsened existing inequalities.

Children from marginalised groups, including Roma and other racialised children, those in institutional care, single-parent households, children with disabilities, and children with a migrant background, are particularly vulnerable to poverty and its consequences. And yet, they are often at risk of being excluded by the very frameworks that were set up to help them.

While the Child Guarantee presents unique opportunities, significant challenges remain in Member States to identify and reach the most vulnerable children. Some EU Member States National Action Plans lack concrete measures or fail to reach vulnerable and marginalised children effectively.

¹ The EU Alliance on Investing in Children is a collaboration of over 20 European networks that share a commitment to ending child poverty and promoting child well-being across Europe.

Adequate funding, robust and disaggregated data collection, integration with broader EU instruments, and stakeholder engagement - including children and civil societies are essential for its success, yet still lacking. In other words, much remains to be done.

Child poverty is a political choice. Addressing it must be our priority.

Nearly three years after the adoption of the Child Guarantee, all action plans have been published and Member States are in the process of delivering their biennial reports.

However, numerous plans submitted to the European Commission fall short of introducing novel initiatives to combat child poverty. Instead, they catalogue pre-existing programmes or make nebulous references to prospective endeavours. Some Member States have not yet started implementing the planned measures.

To ensure this initiative's full potential is realised, we urge the EU Member States to honour their political pledge by fully implementing the National Action Plans. Moreover, as dynamic documents, set to last at least until 2030, it is crucial that these plans undergo frequent revisions and updates to guarantee they embody a rights-based, comprehensive, and integrated approach.

Civil society organisations face significant hurdles in engaging with this process due to the lack of formalised procedures. This must change. Civil society organisations, children, and relevant stakeholders must be actively involved through clear and formalised avenues for engagement. Let's commit to fostering a more inclusive and participatory approach, ensuring that all voices are heard.

Investing in children and their families to lift them out of poverty is crucial for several reasons, and the EU has a vested interest in doing so due to the potential long-term benefits for society and the economy. In particular:

1. The EU is committed to upholding the rights of children as enshrined in international treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Investing in children to lift them out of poverty is not only a legal obligation and a savvy economic strategy, but also a moral imperative to ensure that every child can reach their full potential and enjoy their rights.
2. Breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty requires investing in children and their families today. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes, lower educational attainment, discrimination, and limited economic opportunities as adults. By investing in children, the EU can break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and create pathways for social mobility.
3. The EU can promote social cohesion and inclusion addressing child poverty supports social cohesion and inclusion by ensuring that all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, have equal opportunities to thrive and succeed.
4. Create a more cohesive society by ensuring that all children and their households have access to a core set of essential services including quality education, postnatal care and social support. By investing in quality and inclusive education, the EU must ensure that all children

have access to a high-quality education that enables them to thrive in a challenging future and guarantees a child's well-being.

5. Strengthen a fair and prosperous society. Indeed, investing in children experiencing poverty, not only strengthens the EU economic and social fabric, but also ensures that these children have the possibility to become protagonists of innovation, entrepreneurship, and overall prosperity.

Overall, investing in children to address poverty is not only a matter of social justice but also an investment in the future well-being and prosperity of our society. By prioritising children's needs and providing them with the support and resources they need to thrive, the EU can create a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous future for all.

As we approach the European Elections, we must underscore the central importance of the Child Guarantee and the fight against child poverty. Ensuring these critical issues remain at the forefront of EU institutions and Member States' political agendas is fundamental.

The following Alliance members endorse this statement:

- Alliance for Childhood - European Network Group
- Caritas Europa
- COFACE Families Europe
- Don Bosco International (DBI)
- Dynamo International
- Eurochild
- Eurodiaconia
- EuroHealthNet
- European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)
- European Public Health Alliance
- European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network
- Hope and Homes for Children
- Learning for Well-being Foundation
- Lifelong Learning Platform
- Make Mothers Matter
- Mental Health Europe
- Save the Children
- SOS Children's Villages
- UNICEF