

European Parliament backs real investment to end child poverty, now the EU must deliver

The EU Alliance for Investing in Children welcomes the European Parliament's adoption of its INI Report on developing a new EU anti-poverty strategy, which places the protection of children and the fight against child poverty where it belongs: at the heart of Europe's social and democratic project.

This outcome matters because it shows that, even in a political moment dominated by competitiveness and security narratives, the European Parliament can still choose a different path: one that treats poverty as a violation of human dignity and human rights, and that recognises the need for coordinated, holistic solutions involving all levels of governance and civil society.

For the Alliance for Investing in Children (Alliance) and its members, this is also a clear advocacy milestone. Through sustained engagement with European Parliament stakeholders, we have helped secure a strong chapter on child protection and child poverty, as well as concrete provisions that reflect core priorities of the Alliance's policy paper '*A Europe that protects every child: Aligning EU's policies and budget to eradicate child poverty*'.

[A strong political commitment: Parliament calls for a dedicated €20 billion envelope for the Child Guarantee and strengthens ESF+ earmarking for child poverty](#)

The headline achievement is the Parliament's call for the European Child Guarantee to have a dedicated budget of **at least €20 billion** in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034), implemented through ESF+. This is accompanied by a strengthened commitment that Member States allocate **at least 5% of ESF+** to projects and structural investments combating child poverty, with **at least 10% earmarked** in Member States where child poverty and social exclusion exceed the EU average.

This is exactly the scale of ambition the Alliance has called for: predictable, ring-fenced, multiannual resources that match the reality of a crisis affecting **around one in four children** in the EU.

Crucially, the Parliament's call also recognises something policymakers too often forget: **the Child Guarantee is already working and delivering results**. National action plans, ESF+ investment, biennial reporting and coordinated implementation have expanded school meal programmes, strengthened inclusion measures, and supported new models of social innovation that would not exist without this European framework.

[Beyond funding: the report reflects key Alliance priorities on governance, transparency, prevention, and child protection](#)

The Alliance welcomes that the Parliament did not treat funding as an isolated "budget line", but linked investment to governance and accountability. The report stresses that the use of funds should be **transparent** and require the **involvement of social organisations** in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This aligns directly with the Alliance's call for meaningful participation of civil society and the communities affected by poverty across the full policy cycle, including children and their families.

The report also strengthens **EU-level oversight** by calling for the Commission to monitor Child Guarantee implementation within the **European Semester** and for country-specific recommendations to reflect Member States' compliance with minimum ESF+ allocation requirements for tackling child poverty. This mirrors the Alliance's emphasis on robust monitoring frameworks and stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure national action plans evolve, improve, and close gaps rather than becoming static declarations.

We also welcome the report's clear commitment to prevention and child well-being across essential services. It highlights early childhood education and care (ECEC) quality through adequate financial and human resources, after-school care and tackling early school leaving, and calls for strengthened staff training and early warning systems. These priorities reflect the Alliance's core argument: early and preventive investment is not "optional social spending", but the most effective way to reduce inequality across the life course.

The report also endorses a **child-focused approach to social protection**, including targeted benefits and practical measures such as child allowances, school meals, and cost-reduction schemes for cultural, sport, leisure, and extracurricular activities. This is consistent with the Alliance's call for welfare systems that prevent deprivation, support families, and reduce long-term societal costs.

Equally important is the Parliament's **strong prevention and child protection dimension**: it calls for ensuring every child's right to family life, preventing poverty from being used as the sole ground for institutional placement, and investing in family- and community-based care, including safe foster care systems. The report condemns violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect and calls for investment in integrated child protection systems, including tackling bullying and cyber-violence that disproportionately affect children in vulnerable situations.

Finally, the report reinforces what the Alliance has long argued: eradication of poverty requires a **coordinated, holistic approach**, involving Member States, local and regional authorities, social partners, and civil society. It also calls for national action plans to implement the strategy with the involvement of local and regional authorities and civil society, and underlines that the strategy will only deliver results if accompanied by adequate funding at the EU and national level, including ring-fenced allocations in the next MFF and a strong role for ESF+.

[The next critical milestone: reinforcing effective implementation of the European Child Guarantee](#)

This parliamentary victory must now translate into decisive action by the European Commission as it undertakes the **strengthening of the European Child Guarantee**. The Alliance is clear: the Commission must preserve the integrity of the European Child Guarantee and focus on strengthening its implementation, building on what already works to better reach children in vulnerable situations.

A strengthened Child Guarantee should protect effective elements already delivering impact and **codify good practices** emerging from national action plans and implementation experiences. That means: making concrete what is currently uneven across Member States, and ensuring that the "best of Europe" becomes the baseline, not the exception.

The strengthening must also address persistent gaps, such as:

- **Cross-sectoral and multi-level governance collaboration with a strong focus on local implementation and decision-making:** the Commission should prioritise the adoption of cross-ministerial implementation strategies and ensure a meaningful involvement of municipalities, regions, and frontline services, because the Child Guarantee heart lies where children actually access support. The Parliament itself underlines the importance of involving local and regional authorities and civil society in implementing anti-poverty action plans.
- **Stronger Commission coordination and guidance:** the strengthening must include clear and public guidelines, milestones, and structured engagement opportunities for all stakeholders, including civil society organisations, children and families. The Parliament's emphasis on meaningful participation and co-creation must be operationalised through predictable processes, not ad hoc consultations.
- **Better data and monitoring for children in vulnerable situations:** without timely, disaggregated data, different groups of children in vulnerable situations might remain invisible. The report

stresses the need for systematic collection and use of disaggregated data and updated equality data collection guidance to reveal structural inequalities and pockets of exclusion.

- **Sustainable funding beyond one budget cycle:** strengthening the Child Guarantee without long-term resources is an empty exercise. Parliament's call for a dedicated €20 billion envelope and strengthened ESF+ earmarking must be treated as the floor, not the ceiling, and complemented by strong national budget commitments.

The other decisive front: ESF+ and MFF negotiations, because implementation is impossible without resources

Finally, the Parliament's message is unambiguous: **Europe cannot end child poverty through strategies alone.** It needs money that is predictable, protected, traceable and targeted. The upcoming negotiations on ESF+ and the next MFF will determine whether the Child Guarantee becomes a flagship success or a missed opportunity weakened by underfunding.

This is why the Alliance calls on EU institutions and Member States to defend (and deliver on) the commitments secured in the report: **a dedicated €20 billion envelope for the Child Guarantee, strengthened ESF+ earmarking at 5% and 10%, transparent spending, and meaningful stakeholder involvement.** This is the minimum required to turn political promises into services, protection, and opportunities for children across Europe.

Today's parliamentary vote demonstrates that ambitious solutions are possible. The task now is to ensure that the **Commission strengthens the Child Guarantee decisively, and that the EU's budget negotiations deliver the resources needed** to make child poverty reduction real, measurable, and lasting.