

# Consultation Document on the European Child Guarantee

The aim of the European Child Guarantee is to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing access of children in need to a set of key services.

The European Child Guarantee provides guidance and tools for Member States to support children in need: persons under the age of 18 who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The set of key services have been identified and agreed.

Member States should take into account the specific needs of those from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those experiencing homelessness, disabilities, with precarious family situations, migrant, minority racial or ethnic backgrounds or those in alternative care.

The five pillars of access to key services that have been identified are:

- Providing **free access** to early childhood education and care
- Providing **free access** to education (including school-based activities)
- Providing **free access** to a healthy meal each school day and **effective access** to nutrition
- Providing **free access** to healthcare
- Ensuring **effective access** to adequate housing

Information about the European Child Guarantee can be found on the [European Commission website](#).

## What you are being asked to do

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is now engaging with stakeholders in the preparation of a National Action Plan and seeking their views of children in need and the barriers they face in accessing and taking-up the services covered by the European Child Guarantee. Any such observations should also be mindful of national, regional and local organisation and circumstance.

This consultation is taking a written format and is subject to challenging time constraints, owing to the need to develop and submit an action plan to the Commission by March of next year.

Accordingly, written replies should be returned to the DCEDIY [euchildguarantee@equality.gov.ie](mailto:euchildguarantee@equality.gov.ie) no later than 5pm on Friday, 17 December 2021.

In response to the questions listed below, it would be most useful if you could provide the supporting evidence base, where appropriate, and with illustrative real world examples of the challenges to be overcome.

## Please provide your thoughts and observations on the following in relation to the key services (referred to above) in the EU Child Guarantee:

1. What is working well and enables children in need to effectively access these services?
2. How effective are the current levels of access for children in need to these services and supports?
3. Are outcomes for children in need in accessing these services currently being achieved?
4. What key processes lead to the achievement of desired outcomes?
5. What is not working well and/or presenting barriers for children in need trying to access to these services?
6. What could be done to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of each relevant service?
7. Are there gaps in access provision for children in need to any of these services?

8. What are the three main priorities which you think should be addressed strategically to enable children in need to access these services?
9. What are the most common issues, both positive and negative, in your experience, impacting on children in need accessing these services?

## **Background Note for Information:**

Member States are invited to build an integrated and enabling policy framework to address social exclusion of children, focusing on breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage and reducing the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Definitions:**

For the purpose of this Recommendation, the following definitions apply:

- (a) **'children in need'** means persons under the age of 18 years, who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
- (b) **'children with a migrant background'** means third country national children, irrespective of their migration status, and children with nationality of a Member State who have a third country migrant background through at least one of their foreign-born parents;
- (c) **'children in precarious family situations'** means children exposed to various risk factors leading to social exclusion, such as: living in a single parent household; living with a parent with a disability; living in a household where there are mental health problems or long-term illness; living in a household where there is substance abuse, or domestic violence; children of a Union citizen who has moved to another Member State and who themselves remained in their Member State of origin; children having a teenage mother or being a teenage mother; children having an imprisoned parent;
- (d) **'effective access'** means a situation in which services are readily available, affordable, accessible, of good quality, provided in a timely manner and where the potential users are aware of their existence, as well as of entitlements to use them;
- (e) **'effective and free access'** means a situation in which services are free of charge, readily available, accessible, of good quality, provided in a timely manner, where the potential users are aware of their existence, as well as of entitlements to use them;
- (f) **'school-based activities'** means learning by means of play, recreation, sport or cultural activity that takes place within or outside of regular school hours, is organised by the school and is part – or linked to – the school curricula;
- (g) **'healthy meal'** or **'healthy nutrition'** means to a balanced meal consumption, which provide children with nutrients necessary for their physical and mental development and for physical activity that complies with physiological needs;
- (h) **'adequate housing'** means a dwelling that meets the current national technical standards, is in a reasonable state of repair, provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort and is available at an affordable cost.

Member States are invited to:

- (a) guarantee for children in need effective and free access to early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, at least one healthy meal each school day and healthcare;
- (b) guarantee for children in need effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing.

Member States should identify children in need and within this group take into account, wherever appropriate in designing their national integrated measures, specific disadvantages experienced by:

- (a) homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation;
- (b) children with a disability;

- (c) children with a migrant background;
- (d) children with a minority racial or ethnic background (particularly Roma);
- (e) children being in alternative (especially institutional) care;
- (f) children in precarious family situations.

*Source: Proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee (pages 23-24)*