



**First Years First Priority campaign  
Statement on the Council Recommendation  
on the European Child Guarantee**

15 June 2021

On 14 June 2021 EU Member States took a historic step in the fight against child poverty and social exclusion. By [adopting a Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee](#), EU governments have agreed an instrument to guarantee access to essential services for children in need. This initiative comes at a crucial time. Covid-19 has exacerbated existing hardship and health and social inequalities, and the European Child Guarantee is an opportunity for governments to catalyse public investment and reforms so that *all* children have adequate housing, healthy nutrition, access to healthcare and prevention of good quality and quality early learning and childcare, from their very early years.

The *First Years First Priority* campaign welcomes this commitment to help ensure the protection of children's rights. Though the European Child Guarantee refers to a wider age range, we hope that it will catalyse attention to, and investment in, early childhood development. Children's early years are fundamental for their lifelong healthy development and wellbeing, and poverty affects them in a number of ways. It is therefore essential that governments address child poverty in early childhood, and pay special attention to children in vulnerable situations and who face discrimination and exclusion, such as Roma and Traveller children, children with disabilities, migrant and refugee children (including those who are undocumented) and children at risk of entering, or in, alternative care. It is disappointing that the Child Guarantee allows the option of 'placing children into institutions' as our experience shows that this is never in a child's best interests.

Member States will have to develop comprehensive national strategies and action plans to implement the Child Guarantee - by the end of March 2022. We urge governments to ensure that such plans are integrated, holistic and inclusive, with increased support and investment especially for the age group from birth to 3 years of age. It is also important that their implementation facilitates coordination across the education, health, social protection, culture and welfare sectors, and across different levels of government. The monitoring framework for the Child Guarantee should include specific indicators to measure progress in early childhood, and to ensure continuity of services for children in vulnerable situations throughout their childhood years as they grow and develop.

EU governments are expected to use EU funding and national budgets to finance the Child Guarantee in their country. They will also have to nominate a Child Guarantee national coordinator and involve all children and civil society in the development, implementation and monitoring of their national action plans.

Both national coordinators and the international partners of the *First Years First Priority* campaign look forward to engaging in this important process.

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