COFACE Seminar

The Child Guarantee – A tool to tackle family poverty?

What can the Child Guarantee look like?

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The Ambition

"every child in Europe at risk of poverty (including refugee children) has access to free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition."

\- European Parliament

Origins and Context

- **November 2015 - European Parliament resolution calls for establishment of CG**
  - on reducing inequalities with a special focus on **child poverty**

  WHY?
  - Weak implementation of 2013 Recommendation *Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage* & limited use of EU Funds to support implementation
  - Persistent high levels of child poverty and social exclusion

- **2017 Budget - Preparatory action agreed between Commission and Parliament**
  - Child Guarantee Scheme / Establishing a European Child Guarantee and financial support
  - 3 phases: 1.feasibility study; 2. study on economic implementing framework; 3. pilot projects

- **November 2017 - European Pillar of Social Rights – principle 11**
  - Proclaimed by European Parliament, the Council and the Commission
  - *Children have right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.*

- **2018 Negotiations over next round of EU Funds (MFF 2021-2027)**
  - December 2018: European Parliament proposes allocating €5.9 billion of European Social Fund Plus+ to Child Guarantee

- **2019 Incoming European Commission**
  - from scepticism to commitment
  - *"To support every child in need, I will create the European Child Guarantee, picking up on the idea proposed by the European Parliament"* (COM President, Ursula von der Leyen)
    - responsibility for its development to the Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit
    - overall coordinating role to Vice-President-designate for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica.

Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee Phase 1: 2018-2020

- **4 Target Groups**
  - children residing in institutions; children with disabilities; children with a migrant background [including refugee children]; children living in a precarious family situation

- **Outputs**
  - Inception Report
  - 28 country reports
  - 5 Policy Papers
    - free healthcare; free education; free early childhood education and care [ECEC]; decent housing and adequate nutrition
  - 4 Target Group Discussion Papers
  - On-line consultation with key stakeholders
  - 8 Case Studies
    - highlighting lessons from international funding programmes
  - 4 consultations with children (focus groups)
  - 4 fact-finding workshops
    - September and October 2019 (one on each TG)
  - Intermediate Report
  - Final Conference (17 February 2020)
  - Final Report (June 2020 – 286 pages)
    - Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en

FSCG1 – Main Findings 1-5

- **Action is needed** to increase access by children in vulnerable situations to the five PAs under scrutiny needs

- Failure to ensure access to the five policy areas has **short & long term negative consequences** for children & society

- Lack of access to the five policy areas represents a **failure to uphold children's rights**

- It is **feasible to guarantee access** to the five PAs

- Efforts to ensure access to the five PAs should **focus on all children** in vulnerable situations

FSCG1 – Main Findings 6-10

- Children who are most disadvantaged need more support to access 5 PAs: a **twin-track approach** is key to increasing access & inclusivity

- Ensuring **access to 5 PAs on its own is not sufficient**: mainstream services also need to be inclusive & of high quality so as to ensure that children in vulnerable situations benefit fully & avoid stigma and segregation

- Ensuring access to the five PAs is necessary but **not sufficient to tackle child poverty & social exclusion**

- Ensuring access to the five PAs requires a **comprehensive approach** at Member State level

- Primary responsibility for ensuring access to the five PAs rests with Member States, but **EU action is feasible** to support them (i.e. policy coordination & guidance + financial support) & has **clear legal basis**

FSCG1 – Main Findings 11-15

- Existing efforts by the EU to support and encourage Member States to ensure access by children in vulnerable situations are helpful, but a new EU initiative could bring **real added value** & a more effective use of EU instruments
- **EU funds have considerable potential** to play a more effective and strategic role in supporting access to the five PAs
- **EU political leadership** will be important in encouraging Member States to ensure access to the five PAs
- **Mainstreaming** support for the implementation of a possible new initiative across the European Commission & ensuring its full use of the instruments available is essential
- Considerable **popular & political demand** for a CG

4 (of 9) key issues to be teased out

- How to **ensure impact** of CG & Member States' accountability for delivery?
  - develop in parallel:
    - a comprehensive strategic thinking focusing on the general policy outcomes to be achieved by the CG
    - understandable and tangible policy levers (i.e. (sub)national policies/ programmes/ projects) to achieve the desired policy outcomes and create accountability of Member States in each specific component of the CG

- **Which children** should be covered?
  - all children, specific target groups, children at risk of poverty, children in low income families, children in need?
    - **SDGs**: "leave no one behind" and endeavour "to reach the furthest behind first"

- How to ensure focussing on access to 5/6 policy areas links to development of overall **national strategies on child poverty**?

- How to increase scale/use/impact of **EU Funds**?
  - how to ensure strategic impact/leverage on MS policies?

FSCG2

Study on the economic implementing framework of a possible EU child guarantee scheme including its financial foundation

- explore the **cost & benefits** for the competent authorities to guarantee in practice that all children at risk of poverty in EU have access to the 5 social rights
- provide a thorough **economic and financial** analysis of the design, feasibility, governance and implementation options of a possible future CG scheme in all EU Member States
- Identify **understandable and tangible policy levers** (i.e. (sub)national policies/ programmes/ projects) to achieve the desired policy outcomes and create accountability of Member States in each specific component of the CG
- Focus on **children at risk of poverty**

FSCG2 - Components to be examined & actions to be assessed in depth

- **Access to adequate nutrition**
  - each child at risk of poverty should receive at least **one healthy balanced full meal per day**
    - provision of free/subsidised school full meals for children in low-income households

- **Access to free ECEC**
  - each child at risk of poverty should have **access to free ECEC services**
    - provision of free ECEC for children in low-income households

- **Access to decent housing**
  - there should be **no homeless children**
    - provision of services aiming at preventing and fighting child homelessness of children & their families

- **Access to free education**
  - there should be **no school costs** for children at risk of poverty attending compulsory school
    - removal of school costs for children in low-income households attending compulsory school

- **Access to free health services**
  - each child at risk of poverty should be provided with **free regular health examinations and follow-up treatment** at their successive growth stages
    - organisation of free post-natal health examination at birth; home visits or other forms of regular examinations organised during the first years of life and then regular health monitoring in school or in other settings

- **Integrated services**
    - provision of integrated services, such as organisation of an extended/ whole-day school (or networked provision of key services in day care or other settings)

Commission Roadmap & Consultation

- 19 August 2020 Commission issues Roadmap
  - invites feedback by 07 October
- **Some key elements**
  - Proposing a Council Recommendation in 2021
  - Adds Culture & Leisure activities to EP's 5 policy areas
  - Focus is on children in need
  - Makes link to consequences of Covid-19
  - MS to adopt Multi-annual National Strategies until 2030 implemented through Child Guarantee National Action Plans
  - Focus is on implementation

Commission Roadmap & Consultation

- **COM role:**
  - Help build capacity in MS (training, peer review, mentoring, sharing best practices)
  - Provide policy coordination across stakeholders, governance levels & policies – monitor outcomes of implementation in MS
  - Provide strategic guidance on strengthened or more targeted use of ESIF funds

- **Consultation of citizens & stakeholders**
  - collect relevant information on the challenges encountered by national/local administrations, service providers, children, and civil society
  - identify the main gaps that could be addressed at European Union level and to identify areas where the Union can have added value

Conclusion – Challenges & Opportunities

- **3 key challenges in ensuring the development of an effective CG**
  - Ensure CG remains a high political priority at a time of Covid-19 & Brexit
  - Ensure the CG balances the promotion of a comprehensive strategic vision for tackling child poverty with a focus on specific and concrete actions that will make a tangible impact & which Member States can be held to account for delivering
  - Ensure MS support Council Recommendation & increased ESIF+ funds for children
- **3 opportunities for stakeholders to use the CG**
  - Encourage Member States to develop comprehensive strategies to combat child & family poverty
  - Foster better identification by MS of children in need & key barriers at (sub)national level preventing their access to essential services & trigger the development & funding of policies/programmes to overcome those barriers
  - Ensure and contribute to regular monitoring & reporting on progress – hold MS to account for delivering on the CG