



INTEGRATING POLICY: A KEY CHALLENGE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE EUROPEAN CHILD GUARANTEE

European expert meeting - The role of local level prevention systems for implementing the European Child Guarantee

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Service Integration Plays a Crucial Role in Developing Comprehensive Child Policies Across Most Countries

- Most disadvantaged children & families have complex (and intersecting) needs
 - ✓ Increased attention to the early years and need to develop coordinated support in the “1000 first days” (e.g. in Australia, New Zealand, Finland, Ireland, France and the United Kingdom)
 - ✓ At the service delivery level, a *client-centred approach* allows families to be at the centre of coordinated services and supports:
 - ❖ Service providers and organizations can utilise case-management methods to help families address key issues and connect with various support services.
 - ❖ Wraparound supports aim to provide services to families with complex needs while collaborating with all areas of a client’s environment such as schools or workplaces, family and natural supports, and community-based supports
 - ✓ using a *whole-systems approach* within national strategies, mechanisms such as coordinated access to services and encouraging knowledge sharing methods.

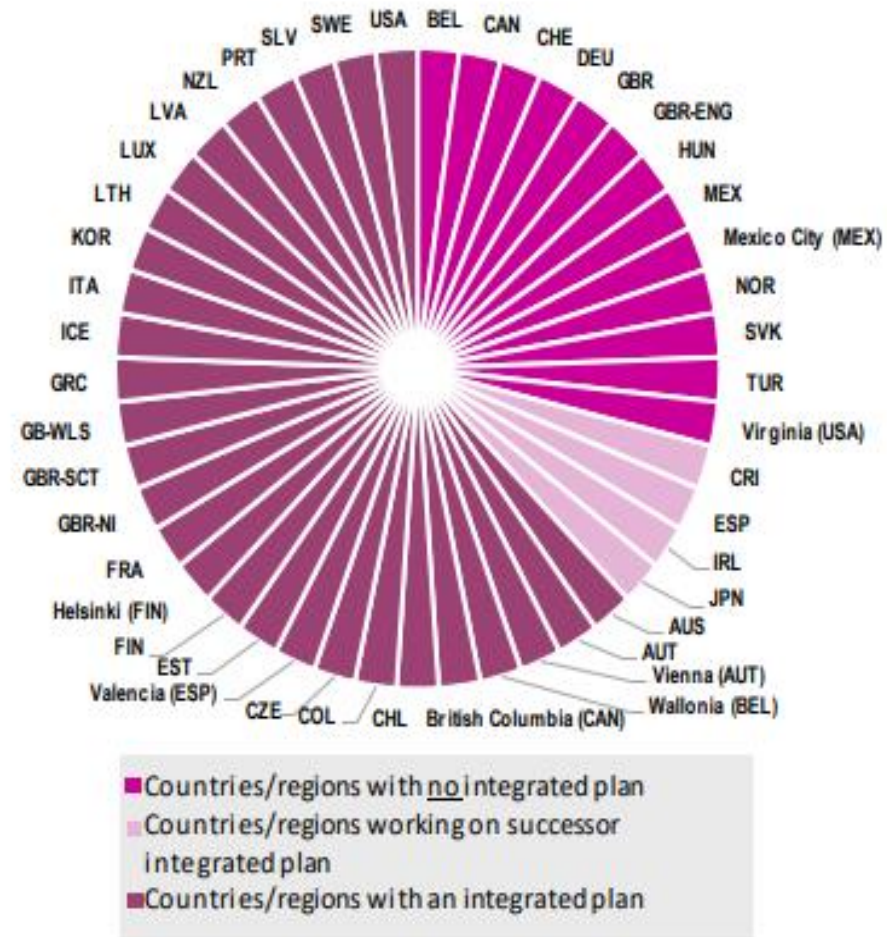
Integrated Policymaking: A Growing Trend

- Increased focus of policies on the implementation of **children's rights** and on **child well-being**
 - ✓ CWB is multidimensional and shaped by the various environments where children live (family, school, community/neighbourhood, digital).
- ⇒ Promoting child well-being requires coordinated government efforts to provide the support children need for a good start and to tackle childhood disadvantage.
- OECD countries typically place **leadership of the child well-being agenda within a single government ministry or agency**, usually those with a social or health portfolio.
 - ✓ Several countries use inter-ministerial committees and the centre of government to drive implementation, with the roles of these mechanisms relevant for prioritisation and brokering of partnerships.
 - ✓ Good policymaking for child well-being requires ministries, agencies, and service providers to collaborate on a few key issues – wicked problems - that demand expertise and cross-sector cooperation

Integrated Policy Plans for Child Well-Being across the OECD

Figure 1. Most OECD countries have an integrated policy plan for child well-being

Countries and regions with or without an integrated plan for child well-being, or working on a successor integrated plan for child well-being



Note: Figure shows only respondent countries and regions to the Questionnaire, in total 34 OECD countries and eleven regions. "Working on successor integrated plan" means that the country is currently working to update or revise its integrated plan for child well-being. Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on the 2022 OECD Child Well-being Policy Questionnaire.

Barriers to Effective Cross-Government Collaboration

- **It is difficult to engage ministries that don't see themselves as playing a role in promoting child well-being.**

Integrated plans are often cross-cutting, but leadership usually remains with traditional child-focused ministries like health or social affairs. While some countries use interministerial committees and central government bodies to encourage collaboration, these mechanisms are better suited for launching initiatives rather than sustaining long-term efforts.

When ongoing attention is needed, such as for child well-being, responsibility often shifts back to line ministries, where it becomes less of a priority.

Overlaps or Synergies with other ongoing strategies / policy plans. For instance, in Portugal, the implementation of the Child Guarantee has to interact/build on with the National Strategy to Combat Poverty, National Strategy for Children's Rights, National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities, National Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities, National Programme for the Promotion of Healthy Eating, Programme for Learning Recovery – School+ Plan...

⇒ High coordination costs, monitoring and leadership & management issues

- **Countries have concrete difficulties growing the integrated plans beyond a guiding framework to become a real driver of cross-government work.**

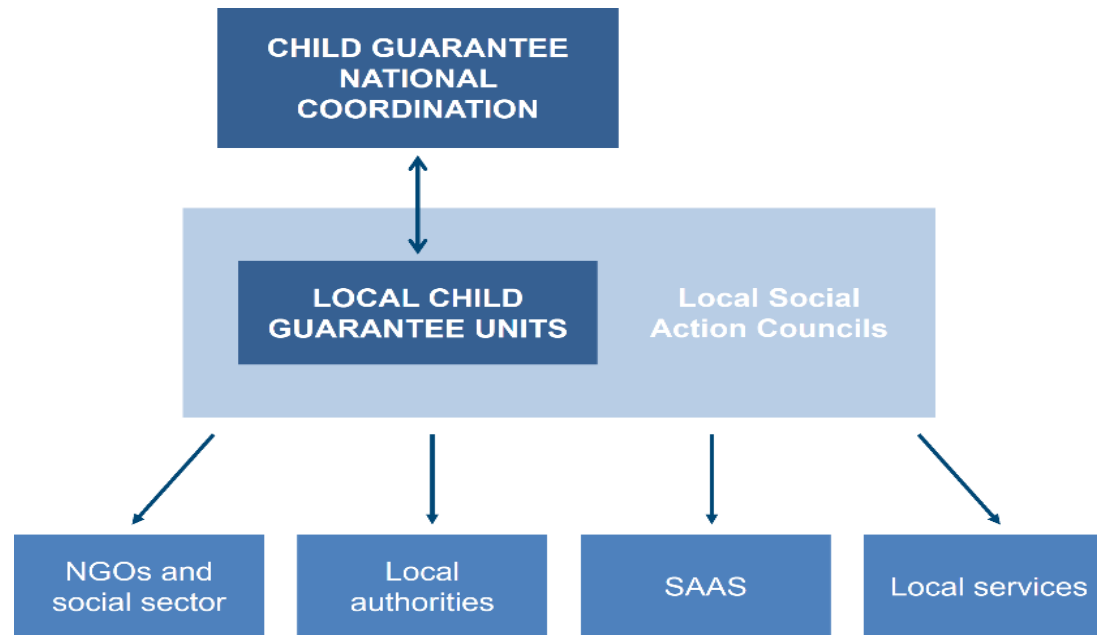
Integrated policy plans help steer policy and are a practical tool to structure and organise the child well-being agenda. However, more efforts can be put into aligning with activities rather than adapting activities to meet the integrated plan's expected outcomes.

- **Integrated policy plans can be too broad and not set out clear priorities for child well-being.**

Integrated plans are the results of broad consultations processes, which can result in broad agendas causing ambiguity over what the government needs to first get right to promote child well-being.

Vertical coordination with the Local Authorities Presents Significant Challenges

Figure. Overview of the vertical coordination in Portugal



Note: Elaborated by the OECD based on information available on the Portuguese Child Guarantee Action Plan 2022-2030 and interviews.

Source: Ongoing DG REFORM-OECD project on “Developing structural tools to support the implementation of the European Child Guarantee in Portugal “

Actions to ensure that local authorities possess a solid understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and can fulfil their duties with a significant level of homogeneity.

- Provide guidelines and resources to empower local units and ensure they can comply with the Child Guarantee goals.
- Conduct monitoring meetings to track progress, clarify questions and steer local units towards alignment with the Child Guarantee framework.
- Foster an environment of continuous learning both among local units and with national stakeholders.

Ireland

- Local inter-agency coordination and collaboration for delivering services to children, young people, and their families in Ireland is managed by local **Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC)**. These committees, established at the county level, aim to systematically bring together public, private, and social organisations to achieve shared goals and bridge national policy with local provision.
- To support coordination and learning across local CYPSC include the **National Network of CYPSC coordinators**, which is a forum for knowledge-exchange that meets quarterly. The Network connects CYPSC staff across Ireland with each other and with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY) – who leads the CYPSC initiative. Beyond fostering a learning culture environment through regular meetings and constant contact, the Network is further supported by an **online knowledge hub** for sharing practice and implementation tools.
- Another workstream led by the DCEDIY to support a **shift towards evidence-informed prevention and early intervention** services for children, young people, and their families is the "What Works" initiative. This initiative is comprised of four strands: data, evidence, professional development and capacity building, and quality. Specific tools and projects are developed within each strand.

For instance, the What Works Evidence Hub is a repository of established and emerging evidence on Prevention and Early Intervention Initiatives (PEI) that have been shown to improve outcomes for children and young people. The Hub provides easy access to key pieces of evidence on successful programmes, making this information accessible to policymakers, providers, and other stakeholders.

Conclusions

- The European Child Guarantee aims to encourage and leverage countries' efforts to promote more integrated policies and deliver services that better address the multi-faceted and complex needs of the most disadvantaged children.
- However, its implementation poses multiple challenges:
 - At national level, the implementation of the CG could be perceived as adding a layer of complication to the monitoring of policies which benefit children; several plans and strategies are often in place in different areas with their own logic and monitoring/reporting obligations
 - ⇒ *adding an additional layer of monitoring has a financial cost and in human resources and can lead to 'coordination fatigue' if the benefits are not clearly perceived by the various stakeholders.*
 - At the local level, the implementation of the Child Guarantee requires guidance and resources to foster collective learning across local authorities and between local and national levels of government, as well as to promote close collaboration with key stakeholders at the local level.