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National Parents' Society of Persons with Disability

GOVERNMENT OF MALTA

Implementing the European Child Guarantee for Children with Disabilities

VALLETTA, MALTA
18TH NOVEMBER 2026



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18th November 2026

Activities

On 18th November 2026, COFACE will organise a European expert meeting which will look at the intersections of family and disability policy in the framework of the European Child Guarantee. The meeting will be co-hosted with the Ministry for Social Policy and the Family, Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector and the National Parents' Society for Persons with Disabilities in Malta.

- 17th November: Delegates will arrive in Malta, and a meeting will be organised for the COFACE Administrative Council.
- 18th November: The European expert meeting will be hosted at the Grand Excelsior in Valletta to take stock of recent developments of the Child Guarantee in relation to children with disabilities.
- 19th November: Some delegates will stay on for additional meetings. One meeting for ministry representatives from 9.00-12.00 which will include a spotlight on the Malta Social plan for families. The other is the annual meeting of the COFACE Disability platform for the rights of persons with disabilities and their families.

Background

COFACE Families Europe is an active supporter of the European Child Guarantee, and is supporting its implementation through various tools and channels: expert meetings, policy work and analysis, research on integrated family support models, and organising peer exchanges between national family ministries on good practices at policy/practice level.

COFACE has a specific platform of organisations (mainly representing family carers of children with disabilities) which monitors more specifically the rights of children with disabilities and their families (driven by the UNCRPD), through the Child Guarantee as well as other EU frameworks on disability, care and inclusive education. Key areas of focus include: recognition and support to family carers, promoting inclusive education models, supporting work-life balance of parents and carers, and ensuring that local services for families are fully inclusive of families with disabilities.

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Policy challenges and gaps

Family policy includes measures to support work-life balance, access to care services, flexible work arrangements. These are not always inclusive of parents and carers of people with disabilities, and do not always acknowledge the extra work-care imbalances and pressures of family carers of children/adults with disabilities. Disability policy tends to focus on individual rights of persons with disabilities and implementing the UNCRPD, and especially on adults with disabilities and not children. This approach also fails to recognise that families are the first and main source of care for children with disabilities before they reach adulthood. While the Council Recommendation for a European Child Guarantee mandates Member States to develop measures to support children with disabilities at risk of poverty, not all countries have developed sufficient measures and tend to focus mainly on inclusive education measures.

The European expert meeting

The European expert meeting on 18th November in Valletta will bring different experts from the COFACE network together, as well as key partners in academia and public policy, to take stock of the measures taken to support children with disabilities in the framework of the Child Guarantee and on how to address remaining gaps.

In 2024 and in 2026, Member States submitted their progress reports on the implementation of the Child Guarantee. The European Commission assessed progress and on 6 May 2026, it adopted a new strengthened Child Guarantee, aiming at increasing efforts to end the cycle of child poverty. In this context, the European expert meeting will provide a timely opportunity to assess progress for children with disabilities, collect information on lived experiences of families across Europe, highlighting any challenges or gaps in provision, as well as putting forward policy and practice solutions for effective positive change for children with disabilities and their families.

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Moderator **Sebastian Gonzalez,** COFACE Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer

9.00-9.30 Registration and coffee

9.30-10.15 Welcome panel

Michael Falzon, Hon. Minister for Social Policy and the Family, Malta
Julia Farrugia, Hon. Minister for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector, Malta
Antonia Torrens, COFACE President
Marchita Mangiafico, Vice-President, NPSPD

10.15-11.00 Strengthening the European Child Guarantee for Children with disabilities and their families

Keynote: **Michele Consolini**, Research Officer, Eurofound

11.00-11.30 Stretching break

11.30-12.30 Breakout round tables: What challenges exist for children with disabilities and their families today?

We will start from the lived experience of families. Participants will divide up into breakout groups in order to brainstorm collectively on challenges for children with disabilities in different countries and in different areas covered under the European Child Guarantee. The groups will have a mix of stakeholders: families, practitioners, policy-makers and researchers.

11.30-11.40 Presentation of the round table objectives
11.40-12.30 Group discussions to identify challenges today

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12.30-13.00 Back to the plenary

Each breakout group will feed back to the plenary, to highlight the key challenges identified.

13.00-14.00 Lunch and stretching break

14.00-15.30 Breakout round tables: what solutions exist to support children with disabilities and their families?

These parallel sessions will spotlight approaches which use a holistic approach to support children with disabilities and their families, driven by stakeholders in different policy fields.

Find all the details about the breakout sessions on the next page.

15.30-16.30 Final plenary followed by closing networking session

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Breakout round tables: what solutions exist to support children with disabilities and their families? 14.00 - 15.30

1.Integrated services around children with disabilities and their families: coordination of health, education and social support. This round table will focus on existing coordination models in Norway, and intersections of disabilities with other vulnerabilities such as single parenthood in Hungary.

Speakers:
Anna Nagy, Egyszulo, Director of Egyszulo, Hungary
Kaja Larsen Østerud, Senior Researcher, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

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2.Measures to support family carers of children and young persons with disabilities. This round table will focus on peer support for family carers in France, and on the family-centered approach to early childhood intervention (ECI) in Greece.

Speakers:
Chantal Bruno, Member of the Steering Committee of the "RepairAidants" initiative and Trainer of Trainers at APF France Handicap
Agapi Papadaki, Board Member of Disability Support Europe and Co-Chair of their working group on Early Intervention, Greece

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3.Inclusive education and ECEC in practice: challenges and solutions
This round table will examine inclusive education from the perspective of families, from ECEC into primary and secondary school, with a spotlight on Malta and Belgium.

Speakers:
Marchita Mangiafico, Vice-President, NPSPD, Malta
Iwona Suska, Steering group member, Ouders voor inclusie, Belgium - **Darline Bogaert**, member of Ouders voor inclusie and pre-school teacher, Belgium.

4.Access to healthcare for children with disabilities: from theory to practice
This round table will examine coordination of access to health care for children with disabilities in Portugal, and early intervention and screening for children with hearing disabilities in Spain.

Speakers:
Gonçalo Solla, Director, Fundaçao Liga, Portugal
Natalia Beraza, Head of international affairs, FIAPAS, Spain

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