

REPORT
AUGUST 2013

THE 2013 NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMMES (NRP)
FROM A CHILD POVERTY AND
WELL-BEING PERSPECTIVE



KEY MESSAGES

Overall the 2013 National Reform Programmes (NRPs) show some modest improvements from a child poverty and well-being perspective compared to the 2012 NRPs. However, in most NRPs the attention given to tackling child poverty and social exclusion still falls far short of what is necessary both to achieve the Europe 2020 goal of reducing poverty and social exclusion by 20 million by 2020 and to respond to the severe and growing impact of the economic crisis and austerity measures on children and their families. Furthermore, it is clear that much remains to be done to embed the European Commission's Social Investment Package and, in particular, the Recommendation on Investing in Children at the heart of the Europe 2020 process. The following recommendations are intended to address this challenge and to address the main issues identified by Eurochild members and partners in their analysis of the 2013 National Reform Programmes.

1. ENSURE THAT CHILD POVERTY AND WELL-BEING IS A POLITICAL PRIORITY IN ALL EU MEMBER STATES

Member States should be encouraged to either set a specific national (sub) target for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion - or to indicate what proportion of their overall Europe 2020 poverty and social exclusion target will cover children.

Given the low priority to date that is given to child poverty and social exclusion in most NRPs, all Member States should be asked to report specifically on what measures they have introduced to reduce and prevent child poverty and social exclusion and to ensure that the three pillar approach advocated in the Commission Recommendation is being implemented. To encourage Member States to give more attention to child poverty and social exclusion issues Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) should be issued to those countries performing badly on child poverty and social exclusion

2. ASSESS THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN OF ALL AUSTERITY MEASURES AND ALL MEASURES IN NRPS

Given the negative impact that many austerity measures are having on children's well-being, in future NRPs Member States should be asked to carry out ex ante and ex-post impact assessments to determine the effect that all policy measures (including macroeconomic and financial measures) will have on children and in particular on those children at greatest risk of severe poverty and social exclusion. These are important tools to assess the potential impact of policies before they are introduced and monitor the actual impact they have after being put in place. Moreover, child poverty should be among the indicators used to monitor the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union.

3. INCREASE THE USE OF STRUCTURAL FUNDS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN

The potential contribution of EU Structural Funds to combating child poverty and social exclusion has not yet been fully exploited. Much greater attention should therefore be given to using the 2014-2020 round of funds to promote social inclusion in general and the inclusion of children in particular. Member States should be asked to report on their use of Structural Funds for social inclusion purposes in their NRPs and NSRs.

4. INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN'S ORGANISATIONS AND CHILDREN IN EUROPE 2020 PROCESS

Civil society organisations in general and organisations working with children in particular, were rarely consulted on the preparation and implementation of NRPs (and consultation with children themselves is completely absent). Clear guidance must therefore be given to Member States as to what is expected with respect to consultation and participation, if necessary also issuing CSRs in this area. We repeat our recommendation from last year that the Social Protection Committee and the European Commission should develop a set of standards or guidelines for the involvement of stakeholders in the social dimensions of the Europe 2020 process and should monitor their implementation by Member States.

5. DEVELOP WORK PROGRAMME FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATION ON INVESTING IN CHILDREN

In view of the quite limited impact that the Commission Recommendation on Investing in children has had so far on the implementation of the Europe 2020 process in general and the NRPs in particular the European Commission and the Social Protection Committee should set out a multi-annual work programme to support, monitor and report on implementation of the Recommendation on Investing in children.

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ABSTRACT

In June 2013 - drawing from the experience of the past two years (2011 & 2012)- Eurochild carried out an analysis of the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) of EU Member States with the help of its member organisations. Based on a framework document, respondents were requested to provide information about the extent to which child poverty and social exclusion have featured in the 2013 NRPs. The compiled analysis of responses provides an EU-wide overview of the commitment to fight child poverty and social exclusion. In this year's analysis we also assess whether the NRPs have taken into account the Commission's recent Social Investment Package (SIP) and in particular the Recommendation on child poverty and well-being (Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage) which were launched in February 2013.

EUROCHILD

Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people.

We envisage a Europe where every child grows up happy, healthy and confident, and respected as an individual in his/her own right. We work:

- to promote wide recognition of children as individual rights holders;*
- to convince policy and decision makers to put the best interest of the child in every decision affecting them;*
- to encourage all those working with and for children and their families to take a child-centred approach;*
- to give children and young people in Europe a voice by promoting participatory methods in child and family services, raising children's awareness of their rights and supporting child and youth led organisations.*

Eurochild currently has 162 members in 35 countries all over Europe (both within and outside of the EU).

For more information see: www.eurochild.org

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For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en>

1. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2013 National Reform Programmes (NRPs) are intended to set out how Member States will achieve their national targets set in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In particular they are meant to explain how Member States intend to tackle obstacles to achieving the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 strategy and its Integrated Guidelines for the economic and employment policies of Member States. The most relevant guidelines from a child poverty and social inclusion perspective are Guidelines 9 (Improving the quality and performance of education and training systems at all levels and increasing participation in tertiary or equivalent education) and 10 (Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty).¹

In its assessment of the 2012 NRPs Eurochild identified six key weaknesses in the coverage of child poverty and social exclusion that needed to be better addressed in future NRPs. These were:

- child poverty and social exclusion was not given due political weight in the NRPs;
- the approach was too narrow and not underpinned by children's rights;
- the most vulnerable children were too often ignored with little or no attention to how they are affected by the crisis;
- the integrated approach of Europe 2020 was not taken seriously;
- there was too little emphasis on how EU money was going to be used;
- there was no recognition of meaningful stakeholder involvement.

In this year's assessment of the extent to which child poverty and social exclusion have featured in the 2013 NRPs we particularly concentrate on assessing progress on addressing these six issues. We also assess whether the NRPs have taken into account the Commission's recent Social Investment Package (SIP)¹ and in particular the Recommendation on child poverty and well-being (*Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage*) which were launched in February 2013.²

The report is based primarily on assessments by Eurochild members and partners, from the following countries: Bulgaria (Dani Koleva, National Network for Children), Czech Republic (Michaela Hazdrova, League of Human Rights), Cyprus (Ninetta Kazantzis, PCCPWC), Denmark (Inge Marie Nielsen, The Joint Council for Child Issues in Denmark and Ole Meldgaard, EAPN DK), Estonia (Ene Tomberg, Estonian Union for Child Welfare), Finland (Hanna Heinonen and Heikki Sariola, Central Union for Child Welfare), France (Justine Honoré, CNAPE), Germany (Katja Sieg and Ulrike Wisser, Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, AGJ), Greece (Ioanna Avloniti, The Smile of the Child), Hungary (Maria Herczog and Eva Flora Varga, Family Child Youth Association), Ireland (Maria Corbett and Edel Quinn, Children's Rights Alliance), Italy (Alessandra Pavani, Fondazione l'Albero della Vita), Lithuania (Dovile Sakaliene and Jurate Guzeviciute, Human Rights Monitoring Institute), Luxembourg (Robert Urbe, EAPN Luxembourg), the Netherlands (Beata Stappers, Defence for Children), Poland (Wielislawa Warzywoda-Kruszynska, University of Lodz), Portugal (Helder Ferreira and Fatima Veiga, EAPN PT), Romania (Daniela Gheorghe, FONPC), Slovakia (Anna Klimackova, National Centre for Equal Opportunities), Slovenia (Tamara Narat, Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia), Spain (Gabriel González-Bueno, Spanish National Committee for UNICEF), Sweden (Tapio Salonen, Malmö University) and the United Kingdom (England (Nick Davies, Children England), Northern Ireland (Ellen Finlay, Children in Northern Ireland), Scotland (Marion Macleod, Children in Scotland) and Wales (Sean O'Neill, Children in Wales) and Anne Moore (Save the Children UK)). The report has been drafted for Eurochild by an independent expert on European social inclusion policies, Hugh Frazer, who is adjunct professor at the National University of Ireland (Maynooth). Thanks go to Agata D'Addato (Eurochild Senior Policy Coordinator) for the overall coordination and supervision, and to Réka Tunyogi (Eurochild Advocacy and Parliamentary Officer) and Andrea Witt (Eurochild Policy Intern) for their help.

¹ The full title of the SIP is *Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020*. It should be noted that the SIP specifically talks about mainstreaming issues (e.g. active inclusion, child poverty and homelessness) into the Europe 2020 governance process and thus into the NRPs. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0083:FIN:EN:PDF>.

² Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:059:0005:0016:EN:PDF>.

In the light of the findings of this report Eurochild makes a series of recommendations to the European Commission and Member States on how the NRPs and National Social Reports (NSRs) processes can be strengthened in future to give greater attention to the social inclusion and well-being of children.

It should be noted that in this report, where the experience in one or more individual Member States is highlighted, this is either because the Eurochild members and partners from these countries have emphasised the particular point or because they represent a good illustration of the issue under discussion. Consequently, the fact that a particular country is mentioned does not necessarily mean that the point being made does not apply to other countries.

2. EVIDENCE OF POLITICAL PRIORITY BEING GIVEN TO CHILD POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

2.1 LIMITED IDENTIFICATION OF CHILD POVERTY AS IMPORTANT ISSUE IN NRPs

About half of Member States identify child poverty and social exclusion at least to some extent as an important issue in their 2013 NRPs. However, of these only six Member States (CY, DK, EL, ES, IE, UKS) give a fairly high priority to the issue of child poverty and social exclusion. For instance:

- the Cypriot NRP's first priority is to maintain or lower child poverty and social exclusion;
- the Danish NRP highlights the Government aims to reduce poverty and give special priority to socially disadvantaged children and young people;
- in the Greek NRP child poverty is identified as an important issue, mentioned under the main challenges;
- Ireland's 2013 NRP update identifies poverty as one of the five central target areas, within which the particular vulnerability to poverty of children and lone parent families is recognised;
- in the Scottish NRP tackling poverty and especially child poverty and social exclusion is a high priority within a chapter on equity;
- in Spain, for the first time (since 2011 NRP) the government included child poverty as a priority on social policies, as part of the NRP.

Several other countries (e.g. BG, CZ, DE, DK, FI, FR, HU, NL, PT, RO), while not making child poverty and social exclusion a high priority, do give attention to some aspects. For instance:

- the Bulgarian NRP addresses several aspects of child poverty and social exclusion, in particular improving the effectiveness of social payments, improving access to quality services for children, promoting Roma integration and ensuring access to education for disadvantaged groups. Unfortunately often the measures outlined are too aspirational and an insufficient response to the scale of the challenge;
- the Czech NRP does not have a specific focus on child poverty but does refer to the Strategy to Combat Social Exclusion for 2011 – 2015, where one of the aims are focus on participation of socially disadvantaged children into mainstream education (not to exclude them into special schools) and prevention of family breakdown and prevention of placing children into institutional care;
- the Danish NRP mentions that the Government aims to reduce poverty and give special priority to socially disadvantaged children and young people;
- the Estonian NRP considers the coping of families and children to be important and gives particular attention to educational disadvantage and school drop-out;
- Finland's NRP highlights the growing number of low-income families with children, but does not cover child poverty separately and overall gives very little in-depth attention to the whole issue;
- the German NRP acknowledges that child poverty and social exclusion is a challenge but does not elaborate on measures to address it in the NRP as it considers that the NSR is the instrument for social policy reporting;
- the Hungarian NRP considers social inclusion as an important issue and refers to children, among other groups, as a target of intervention; the NRP acknowledges the growing number of children who live in poverty, the identification of the issue is well, but the planned measures and interventions to tackle social exclusion and child poverty are insufficient, limited, fragmented and not universal.
- the Italian NRP mentions child poverty when talking of welfare and poverty and in addressing support actions to very poor families, but it does not seem an important issue as such, it rather seems included in the big box of fight to poverty and social exclusion;
- the Lithuanian NRP, while not explicitly identifying child poverty and social exclusion as an important issue, does submit that one of the key tasks for Lithuania in 2013 is to prepare the action plan for the reduction of social exclusion for 2014–2020 with a special focus on children and youth;

- in the Luxembourg NRP the only issue relevant to child poverty and social exclusion is the provision of child care facilities and the resulting employment of (lone) mothers which in the end also benefits their children;
- in the Netherlands NRP it is stated that greater attention will be devoted to the working, poor families with children and that some additional funds will be used to boost sports, particularly to encourage sport participation of children from low-income households. Also the simplification of child-related schemes is intended to lead to making it financially attractive for single parents receiving social assistance to go to work;
- in the Portuguese NRP child poverty is one of the issues highlighted in the poverty section of the progress report. The content on that section refers to some of the priorities defined by the government, centred on the early intervention, support to vulnerable families (in cash and in-kind benefits) and access to services (as health and education);
- in Romania's NRP children and young people are mentioned in the chapter on decreasing social exclusion and poverty;
- the Slovak NRP mentions child poverty and social exclusion as one of the problems connected with unemployment.

In some NRPs (e.g. PL, SE, SI, UKE, UKNI, UKW) child poverty and social exclusion is not treated as an important issue. For instance the UK NRP, although it makes more references to child poverty and social exclusion in the 2013 report than in recent years, in fact gives no indication that the Government considers child poverty and social exclusion as an important issue. The NRP identifies reform of the welfare system and improving work incentives as the key to eradicating child poverty. However, it makes no reference to the negative impact of benefit policies on child poverty, the weak UK jobs market and the fact that the majority of poor children in the UK live in households where at least one parent works.

2.2 SLIGHT INCREASE IN PRIORITY SINCE 2012

Even though the coverage of child poverty remains limited in most NRPs there is some progress since 2012. About a quarter of Member States (e.g. BG, ES, FR, HU, IE, RO, SK) give somewhat more (but still often insufficient) attention to child poverty and social exclusion in their 2013 NRPs than in 2012. For instance, the Irish NRP contains a more considered and extensive assessment and awareness of child poverty, the vulnerability of children and the various reforms and initiatives required to address the issue. The Slovak NRP introduces a new programme building up the provision of childcare facilities for children below 3 years as a part of the programme of reconciliation employment of parents and taking care about children.

In some countries there have been positive developments which are not reflected in the NRP. For instance, in Wales, the Welsh Government has recently appointed a Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty which is the first Government in the UK to have done so. Since the change in April this year, there has been some encouraging rhetoric around tackling child poverty than there was previously when the focus was on tackling poverty more generally.

The increased attention to child poverty and social exclusion issues in some countries can probably be attributed to some extent to the Commission Recommendation on Investing in children. In the case of one Member State (FR,) Eurochild members and partners consider that it has had a significant impact and nine (CY, EE, EL, ES, FI, HU, IE, PT, SK) consider that it has had a slight impact. However, the remainder consider that it has, to date, had no impact on the NRP process.

2.3 FEW SET CHILD POVERTY TARGET

The continuing relatively low priority given to child poverty and social exclusion in Member States' efforts to achieve the Europe 2020 targets is reflected by the fact that still only a small minority have set a specific target for reducing child poverty and social exclusion. There are, however, some positive developments on which to build although it is still relatively rare for Member States to include specific targets for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion;

- Bulgaria has set a sub-target of reducing the number of children (0-18-year olds) living in poverty by 78 thousand (30% of the overall National Target, and 25% of the number of children living in poverty in 2008);

- Ireland has committed to setting a national sub-target for child poverty but, as yet, this has not been established.
- the Finnish NRP includes only an overall poverty target, which covers children only as a part of the whole poor population;
- Germany, while not setting a specific child poverty target, has set the reintegration of long-term unemployed persons in the field of poverty reduction and single parents who are particularly often in danger of material poverty have been singled out and defined as an own target group. Also Germany lists a number of qualitative targets on the reduction of poverty risks in its NRP. These are for instance an improvement of participation in the social and cultural life of disadvantaged children and adolescents, the integration of persons with a migratory background, and an improved inclusion of persons with disabilities;
- in the Greek NRP a specific child poverty target has been set for 2020, according to the targets the Greek Ministry of Labour has set up in October 2010 as mentioned in the NRP 2011-2014: *Reduction in the number of children (0-17 years) at -risk-of poverty by 100.000 until 2020, which is translated into a reduction of at-risk-of poverty rate for children (0-17) from 23% in 2008 to 18% in 2020.*
- Hungary keeps the 2012 general target which includes families with children. Also the NRP recognises that the indicators have worsened primarily amongst children;
- the Romanian NRP has a child poverty target as part of its agreed national target derived from the EU headline target on poverty and social exclusion and the approach has changed regarding the last year;
- Spain has no specific child poverty target but has committed to reducing child poverty by a similar proportion to that of the general population;
- the UKE NRP refers to the UK's existing child poverty targets (set out below). None of these targets are new. However, the NRP also makes clear that the Government does not support the existing income based targets. The UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland and UK-Wales child poverty target is that set by the UK government at Westminster. In Northern Ireland there was a recent debate within the Assembly to have specific targets for Northern Ireland which was defeated.

3. EXTENT OF COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES UNDERPINNED BY CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

3.1 MOST NRPs LACK A SUFFICIENTLY WIDE-RANGING AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The European Commission Recommendation on Investing in children proposed the adoption of a wide-ranging and comprehensive, three pillar approach,³ to tackling child poverty and social exclusion and promoting child well-being which should be underpinned by a child rights approach. However, only a few Member States (ES) announce significant steps in their NRPs to develop a comprehensive approach and even then there is little emphasis on children's rights.

In most Member States (e.g. BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UKE, UKNI, UKW) the NRP fails to develop a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to tackling child poverty and few emphasise a child rights approach. Where child poverty is mentioned the tendency is just to focus on particular aspects such as access to employment or tackling educational disadvantage. For instance:

- the Bulgarian NRP does not address adequately prevention and parenting support which remains an emerging, fragmented policy field, too often left to the initiative or good will of community organisations;
- the Cypriot NRP while prioritising the issue take quite a narrow approach focussing on measures to get parents back to work and provision of child care;
- the NRP of the Czech Republic covers some elements of a comprehensive approach but misses important areas such as supporting parents' participation in the labour market, improving access to health system and promoting children's participation;
- the Estonian NRP aims to decrease the at-risk-of-poverty rate primarily through increasing employment and increasing the general educational level;
- the Finnish NRP, besides the measures to tackle youth social exclusion, does not set specific measures to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. In the Finnish NRP there is a strong focus on employment, public expenditure, and competition. More wide-ranging and comprehensive measures to tackle child poverty and social exclusion are therefore needed;
- the French NRP proposes several measures which are proposed in the Commission Recommendation but they are not part of a comprehensive approach of child poverty. They include reviewing the education system with special focus on access to school for children under 3 from the most vulnerable families; access to care services for early childhood for poorest families; access to housing and emergency housing; and review of the health system to avoid breakings in the process which is specially problematic for poor families. However, children's rights are never mentioned as an inspiration for those measures;
- in the Greek NRP there is no comprehensive child rights approach or any mention for the most vulnerable children. Yet, without relating it to children, the NRP mentions the development of a "social safety net" against social exclusion, which includes access to basic services, such as medical care, housing and education. This specific objective is not quantified, but highlights the need and willingness of the State to increase access to basic services in the framework of the third pillar of active inclusion policy. Health care system reforms and the issue of homelessness are also mentioned, but without any focus on children. Issues of family support, alternative care or children's right to participate are missing from the NRP.
- the Irish NRP explicitly refers to the second pillar of the Commission Recommendation, i.e. access to quality services. However, there is no focus on access to adequate resources or child participation;
- although the Portuguese progress report highlights that the Portuguese government's priorities are aligned with the Commission Recommendation, child poverty is approached basically in the context of access to resources and services, with no reference to participation;

³ The three pillar of the EC Recommendation Investing in Children are access to adequate resources; access to affordable quality services; and children's right to participate.

- the Romanian NRP's approach is based on the figures, statistics and European funds not on the children's rights. The most vulnerable group of children are mentioned in the NRP but the approach is a little shallow;
- the Slovak NRP emphasises increasing labour market participation of women and parents and increasing employment of youth by developing of the school system aimed at vocational education of children and youth;
- the Swedish NRP has a narrow focus on so called "work-first" strategy which means strengthening of conditions for those households that succeed to get included in the labour market but at the same time have a harsh strategy against households positioned outside the labour market. This strategy can be seen as a stick-carrot policy favourising insiders and disregarding outsiders;
- the United Kingdom NRP's measures are not sufficiently wide-ranging, comprehensive and do not reflect a child rights approach. Some policies may reach out to the most vulnerable and promote child well-being but their potential positive impacts are dwarfed by the negative outcomes produced by other policies and the wider economic climate;
- in the UK (Northern Ireland) the Commission's Recommendation has been forwarded to all relevant departments to inform their work and their consideration of a range of possible future programmes and initiatives but this also demonstrates a lack of understanding of what is required to have a comprehensive child rights approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion;
- the UK-Scotland NRP does not have enough on prevention or on under 3s. There is also not enough focus on most vulnerable and no application of structural funds to services directly for children.

However, some progress towards a more comprehensive approach is evident in some countries. For instance, the Hungarian NRP includes various measures on child poverty and social exclusion, it follows the logic of international requirements, but not consequently and does not reflect on child rights specifically. The Lithuanian NRP stresses the intention to develop the action plan for the reduction of social exclusion for 2014–2020 with a special focus on children and youth.

In some cases (e.g. DE) the lack of a comprehensive approach is because the main measures for social inclusion and combatting poverty are in the National Social Report and Strategic Social Report and the NRP just focusses on employability.

3.2 ONLY A FEW MEMBER STATES HAVE A NATIONAL STRATEGY

In a few cases (e.g. EE, ES, HU, RO, SK, UKNI) the measures highlighted in the NRP are, or will be, in fact part of an overall strategy to tackle child poverty and social exclusion and to promote child well-being. For instance:

- the Estonian NRP acknowledges several national strategies and development plans for improving the situation of children and families. The National Development Plan for Children and Families 2012-2020 includes a strategic goal of rendering Estonia into a country that supports positive parenthood and provides support for raising children and for being a parent, in order to improve the children's living quality and future outlook;
- the Hungarian NRP refers to the National Social Inclusion Strategy 2011-2020 frequently. However, the Strategy itself acknowledges that Hungary lacks the systemic approach with comprehensive and sustainable programs. The Strategy and the NRP undertake to fulfil these gaps in the future;
- in Spain the NSR 2012 mentioned child poverty as a priority in the upcoming National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (now in process of elaboration), and the government made a public commitment that a Child Poverty Plan will be included in the National Action Plan and which will take into account the Commission's Recommendation on Investing in Children. However, specific measures have still to be implemented and resources have yet to be allocated;
- in the United Kingdom the NRP makes no reference to the existing child poverty strategy;
- in the UK (Northern Ireland) the child poverty strategy is an obligation under the child poverty legislation and is UK wide. However the Northern Ireland Executive has decided not to appoint to the UK Commission on Social Mobility and Child Poverty;
- in the UK Scotland has a Scottish Child Poverty Strategy which is reflected in the Scottish NRP;

- in the UK the Welsh Government has a statutory Child Poverty Strategy alongside the Tackling Poverty Action Plan. Both include measures and 'some' indicators. The latter plan is due for re-issue in July 2013.

In many there is no overall strategy to tackle child poverty and social exclusion and to promote well-being which the NRP links into. For instance:

- in Ireland the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion which had child poverty as one of its priorities lapsed in 2008 and has not been replaced or updated;
- in Finland, even though there is a strong political commitment to tackling poverty and social exclusion, there remains a need for child poverty, social exclusion and well-being to be more broadly discussed as part of the overall national strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion. The effects of financial crisis have to be taken into account for all vulnerable children. The goals have to be set in more detail and there has to be specific deadlines outlined for each goal;
- while France has a national policy against poverty which is based on a five year plan and is referred to in the NRP, measures in the NRP belong to various specific areas to tackle poverty (housing, health, employment) but there is not an overall strategy to tackle child poverty;
- in Sweden the government formulates a one-sided strategy neglecting households' abilities to keep up a minimum living standard when unemployed, sick or in labour market programmes. There is a growing contradiction in the policy approach being adopted with, on the one hand, an expanded emphasis on children's rights and, on the other hand, the introduction of activation policies with stricter regulations and sanctions that can put children's rights at risk.

3.3 SOME POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Although the approach in most NRPs is too limited and too narrow there are a range of positive developments in different policy areas.

Several Member States take initiatives that will help to improve access of parents to **employment**. For instance:

- in the Czech NRP pre-school education is a priority and measures are developed to enable the reconciliation of family life;
- in Germany the focus on reducing the number of households with jobless adults should lead to the amelioration of living conditions and lead to more social integration and the strengthened focus on the reintegration of single parents in employment is a new approach. The national government's activities for a better work-life balance, especially the increase in child care opportunities will be continued. Federal, regional and local authorities push ahead with an extension of full-time childcare offers for children from the age of one. The national government, Länder and local authorities aim at providing a childcare scheme for children younger than three years that is in line with demand, until 1st August 2013;
- Slovenia has introduced certain incentives for employers to employ mothers with children under three.

Improving the quality of **early childhood care and education** provision of children so as to better improve the well-being and learning of young children is highlighted in several NRPs. For instance:

- in Denmark the Government has initiated a development programme in the area of day care, where the goal is to strengthen the well-being and learning of all 0-5 year olds and where the significance of social heritage is reduced in relation to children's learning and well-being;
- in France the NRP proposes to promote access to school for children under 3 and access to early childhood care services for poorest families. Those two measures are really linked and concern the same stakeholders but they are treated separately and will certainly be falling out the responsibility of two different ministries;
- in Hungary the development of plans of the infrastructure of day-care facilities for children (nursery, kindergarten) are more emphasised due to the new compulsory kindergarten attendance from age 3 (until 09/2014 it is age 5). The NRP sees this measurement as a tool to strengthen women's participation in the labour market and to combat social exclusion and poverty of children and preparing them to school compensating their possible developmental delays. Similar measures were set in the previous year's NRP and the implementation was not as appropriate as the plans;

- Luxembourg increases the provision of child-care facilities;
- Portugal reached the Barcelona target for children 0-3 years;
- Slovakia builds the provision of child care facilities for children under 3 years.

Several Member States include new measures to tackle educational disadvantage. For instance:

- in Denmark new rules have been introduced to ensure better inclusion in the primary and lower secondary school. The new rules mean new delimitation of special needs education such as that special needs education is reserved for pupils who need more comprehensive support;
- in Estonia there are positive activities towards increasing the availability and quality of education; there are also numerous projects to decrease school violence and domestic violence;
- in Germany there are a number of measures offered by both the federal and regional authorities to combat educational disadvantage and early school leaving, as well as educational drop outs. The qualification initiative aims to provide a diverse range of offers that promote education, competence and effectiveness. Thus, the state tries to reduce educational disadvantages and to compensate for the lack of domestic support. Federal and regional authorities have launched substantial support programmes, also with funds from the European Union;
- the Greek NRP mentions measures to advance on the educational target for the reduction of early school leavers, where Roma children are mentioned as one of the most vulnerable groups, as well as migrant children or children from minorities. However, education and child poverty are not explicitly linked within the NRP.
- in Ireland developments include 6,000 additional afterschool childcare places and the extension of the school food programme;
- in Slovenia the government ensured additional funds at the end of 2012 to provide subsidies for school meals for pupils and students in primary and secondary schools. All secondary school and higher education students living at least five kilometres away from school were provided with a monthly pass for public transport at a unified subsidised price;
- Slovakia changes and increases the system of vocational education of children to ensure their better preparation for employment.

Some Member States give particular attention to **deinstitutionalisation**. For instance, the Czech NRP includes plans for enhancing foster care and reducing institutional care; in Bulgaria, the Government continued implementing the “Vision for the Deinstitutionalisation of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria” National Strategy. However, the main focus is on building small group homes for children with disabilities, development of foster care and restructuring 8 infant homes.

There are a few initiatives in the area of **income support**. For instance, in Italy a new experimentation with the social card (in parallel to the ordinary one) is foreseen, concerning the 12 biggest cities for 1 year: EUR 50 million will be distributed according to family size. The action is aimed at fighting child poverty, by acting on families that have a marginal position in the labour market. Beneficiaries are families in a difficult labour situation having at least one child. In addition to money transfer the intention is to provide customised multi-dimensional assistance to all the family components, in particular to children. Greece has introduced a new means-tested “single child support allowance” in the framework of readjusting birth grants and family benefits to target families most in need. In Sweden housing allowances are being raised for households with children and there are increases in the basic level of parental insurance, but still limited in levels and amounts.

In some NRPs there is more emphasis on increasing **participation in leisure** and recreation activities. For instance, in Hungary, the need for free time activities for (vulnerable) children and the measures to provide them appear more frequently in this year’s NRP;

Some NRPs include measures to protect **the rights of particular groups**. For instance, the Finnish NRP identifies some vulnerable groups such as immigrants and their families. It acknowledges the importance of promoting migrants’ rights, such as rights to basic social and health services, housing, employment and education, including early childhood and basic education. However, the above is done in a very general level. The NRP also emphasises the need for sufficient support and prerequisites for successful school career for all

immigrant students. It proposes a plan to lay down provisions on preparatory training for general upper secondary education for immigrants in the General Upper Secondary Schools Act. The Greek NRP mentions the development of a long-term national strategic plan for the social integration of Roma people, with integrated interventions to be implemented by local municipalities and communes. However, as far as the most vulnerable communities are concerned, the measures in the NRP do not mention children specifically.

3.4 PARTICULARLY NEGATIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In addition to the negative impact on children of falling incomes, rise in poverty numbers and indebtedness and rise in unemployment, several Eurochild members and partners highlight particular **policy changes introduced in response to the crisis that have impacted harshly on children**. For instance:

- in Cyprus the “educational reform” which started already 2 years ago and which was supposed to be the “solution to all problems” including educational disadvantage seems to be in jeopardy because of budget cuts on education, reduction of the number of teachers and increase in the number of students per class (currently at 26);
- in Ireland further cuts to child income supports, the continuing lack of a child rights approach to the NRP and the lack of consideration for the EC recommendation’s other key pillars are disappointing developments;
- in Portugal the consecutive budget cuts on the social transfers (family allowance) and public services (education), combined with the increase of taxes affecting the families’ income, have a direct and immediate effect on children. Social services for children are facing financial difficulties (either because some of the children stop using services or because some of the families have greater difficulties paying for them), and the quality of services may consequently decrease (or the sustainability of services can be at stake). The budget cuts on education (and the whole reorganisation agenda) promote once more deep changes in the daily life of children. The ex-ante assessment of these measures wasn’t done but some of them (like the increased number of students per class and the cuts on learning support activities) have the potential to promote important setbacks on early school leaving;
- in Slovenia there have been cuts in unemployment benefit, child care benefit, the abolition of child benefit for families with higher incomes, stricter condition for childbirth benefit and large family benefit, reductions in the kindergarten fee subsidy for the second child at kindergarten and subsidies for school meals are given only to socially disadvantaged pupils and secondary school students;
- in the UK NRP the only significant development is the reference to the Government’s recent consultation on the measuring child poverty. The Government does not believe that the existing income based targets properly capture the nature of child poverty and would like to replace them with a single multi-dimensional measure. However, there is a widespread view that the existing five income measures are more appropriate;
- in the UK Northern Ireland has yet to appoint a representative to sit on the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. Without this appointment there is now a lack of accountability function, as currently England, Wales and Scotland sit on the Commission. Also in Northern Ireland there is no childcare strategy and The Early Years Policy has separated early years and care and has omitted actions relating to other aspects of early years, instead choosing a very limited focus and not providing any actions to help those 0-3 year old children who are located outside Sure Start areas.

4. IMPACT OF THE CRISIS AND THE EXTENT OF MEASURES TO PROTECT CHILDREN IN THE MOST VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

4.1 LIMITED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF IMPACT OF CRISIS ON CHILDREN

A few NRPs (e.g. EL, IE, UKS) give particular recognition to the impact of the crisis on children. For instance the Irish NRP makes repeated references to the disproportionate effects of poverty on households with children, and children themselves. Also, in several Member States (e.g. FI, HU, IT, SI, SK), while there is not a detailed acknowledgement and understanding of the impact of the crisis on children, there is some acknowledgement of aspects of the impact. For instance, the Finnish NRP mentions the growing number of low-income families with children. It also raises a concern for the risk of increasing household indebtedness. In Italy the effects of the economic crisis are mentioned in relation to family poverty. Slovakia mentions that unemployment has an impact on children.

However, many NRPs (e.g. CZ, DK, LU, NL, PL, PT, SE, UKE, UKNI, UKW) do not acknowledge the negative impact that financial consolidation and austerity packages are having on children. For instance, the Portuguese progress report refers to all the consolidation measures applied by Portugal under the Memorandum of Understanding but fails to acknowledge (even minimally) its negative social impacts. For example, one of the issues that have been repeatedly in the media is the increase of hungry children attending schools. Initially some schools, municipalities and parents associations have mobilised to respond to this specific problem. In September 2012 the Government created the Programme PERA, based on partnerships with municipalities and businesses, in order to address the problem. However, there is still no response regarding the structural causes of hunger in schools.

Some NRPs (e.g. ES, FR, LT, RO) only acknowledge the general impact of the crisis on poverty and social exclusion without specifying the situation of children. For instance the French NRP acknowledges the increase of poverty in France, but child poverty is never acknowledged as such and the impact of the financial crisis on children is not identified.

4.2 SOME SPECIFIC MEASURES TO PROTECT CHILDREN MOST AT RISK

In many Member States there are no specific measures outlined in the NRP to protect children from the worst effects of financial consolidation or austerity packages. However, across the NRPs there are a range of individual initiatives to protect children particularly at risk. For instance:

- the Czech NRP emphasises the intention to continue reforms leading to improvements in the quality of care for vulnerable children, such as unifying management structure and ensuring transparent financing, creating network of services for families with children. The focus is also on professionalization of foster care and creating support and respite services for foster families. The aim is to lower numbers of children who are placed into institutional care;
- in Finland the biggest cities have pointed out extra money to support the schools in the most challenged areas;
- in the French NRP the government proposes to increase financial help for single-parent families and numerous families, 1500 people have been recruited to support individually children with disabilities at school, and Roma children are targeted in measures concerning struggle against discriminations in access to education;
- in Hungary there are a number of initiatives, such as a programme in 10-12 towns to reverse exclusion; initiatives to improve access to social and children welfare services through training primarily Roma social workers in the social and child welfare, as well as in child protection schemes; promoting early kindergarten care to ensure equal opportunities which is focused on the child's transition to school; a school milk and fruit scheme for children in extreme poverty who are attending schools and kindergartens. Unfortunately these initiatives will reach a limited amount of vulnerable children, more universal interventions are needed;
- in Italy there are measures that are directed to vulnerable ranges of children, but which are not referred to as measures to combat child poverty: the constitution of a National Fund for unaccompanied minors; all

the actions aimed at granting every child her/his right to his family, a family; a database of adoptable children and available families has been created and is now active; the inter-ministerial Committee for the coordination of the fight of paedophilia and the Observatory for the fight of child paedophilia and pornography;

- the Spanish NRP is not too specific in the measures to tackle child poverty, only mentions the Roma community and people with disabilities in general;
- in Slovenia the Government ensured additional funds at the end of 2012 to provide subsidies for school meals for pupils and students in primary and secondary schools. All secondary school and higher education students living at least five kilometres away from school were provided with a monthly pass for public transport at a unified subsidised price;
- in Slovakia there are some programmes planned for: increasing the access of Roma children to school and pre-school education; the development of living conditions for disabled people and their families; and ensuring the availability of the social services and deinstitutionalisation of the social services and multiagency networking of social services- making it more accessible for disabled people;
- in the UK the Scottish Government is committed to increasing high quality early learning and childcare in the context of improving outcomes for children and young people and there is a strong theme on reducing inequalities in the Scottish NRP.

5. EXTENT OF INTEGRATED APPROACH TO EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

5.1 CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING OTHER EUROPE 2020 HEADLINE TARGETS

Only a few NRPs (e.g. SK, UKS) acknowledge that investing in measures to tackle child poverty and social exclusion will also contribute to achieving other Europe 2020 headline targets (employment, education, green efficiency, research & development). In most NRPs (e.g. DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, IE, IT, LT, LU, PL, RO, SE, SI, UK) there is no clear acknowledgement. **More frequently the emphasis is on how progress on achieving employment and education targets can contribute to tackling poverty and social exclusion.**

Where there is acknowledgement of links it is often not very specific. Links with other policy areas are most evident most often in relation to employment and education. For instance:

- Germany sees improvements in full-time child care as an important contribution to increasing access to employment;
- in France the school reform is presented as a way to achieve targets concerning school drop-outs and access to university and measures for youth employment contribute to the larger target concerning employment;
- the Czech NRP acknowledges that fighting poverty and social exclusion will contribute to achieving targets in the area of employment. The problem is that the child poverty itself is not a separate issue;
- in the Dutch NRP, although tackling child poverty is not mentioned, some measures are formulated to tackle early school leaving, unemployment among young people, and a better linkage between education/research and the combat against unemployment, which are issues mentioned in Europe 2020 documents;
- the Portuguese progress report refers to the link between access to social services, inclusion and life/work conciliation as an important support to promote the children's inclusion and the participation of the adults in the labour market.

5.2 LIMITED MAINSTREAMING OF CHILD POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

In most NRPs (e.g. BG, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, HU, LT, NL, PL, RO, SE, SI, UK, UKS) child poverty and social exclusion is not a concern that is mainstreamed across other policy areas covered in the NRP. However, it is mainstreamed in a few (e.g. EE, SK) while in others (e.g. FR, IE, IT, PT) in some specific areas. For instance:

- in France the assessment of family policy is presented as a way to reduce public expenses and the measures for youth employment and school reform are integrated in the strategy to tackle unemployment and poverty. However, mainly, the child poverty issue is not targeted a lot in the policies presented in the NRP;
- In the Greek NRP, child poverty is not mentioned explicitly in other policy areas, however it is clearly mentioned that policies for combating unemployment have an impact on children's lives.
- in Ireland the NRP's measures in relation to education includes work on implementing national programme, DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) which focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities;
- in Italy it seems more family poverty than child poverty that is mainstreamed across different policy areas: facilitating housing policies for low income families can be found, as well as the right to study and prevention activities of school dropout, apprenticeship programs to facilitate the entry in the labour market, early years school services, more favourable conditions of parental leave;
- in Portugal the progress report refers one specific measure for couples with children that are both unemployed (the increase of 10% of the unemployment benefit for both adults) as important to fight child poverty and promote children well-being. But at the same time, the maximum value and duration of the unemployment subsidy have been reduced, which dilutes the importance of this 10% increase, especially when we consider that taxation has increased (and specific reductions to taxes are now more limited) and the cost of basic goods and services has increased substantially.

6. EXTENT TO WHICH EU MONEY IS BEING USED TO TACKLE CHILD POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

6.1 LIMITED USE OF EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS

The European Commission's proposal to benchmark a minimum share of structural funds to the European Social Fund (ESF); and to social inclusion and poverty reduction in particular in the next EU budgetary period (2014-2020) will be crucial for tackling child poverty in the Member States. Several NRPs indicate that Structural Funds will be used to some extent to support social inclusion initiatives. For instance, in Germany at least 20% of available ESF-Funds will be spent for the thematic objective "support of social inclusion and reduction of poverty" in the next funding period. However, **most NRPs** (e.g. CZ, DE, DK, FR, IE, LU, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, UKNI) **do not directly indicate the extent to which EU structural funds will be used to tackle particularly child poverty and social exclusion.**

In some NRPs areas which can impact on child poverty are highlighted. In particular Structural Funds are used for support measures for those in a difficult labour market position and for supporting particular groups at risk such as migrants. For instance:

- in Estonia the use of EU Structural Funds will be based on the needs of both children and families. The support funds received will be used for constructing health centres, renovating schools and improving the learning conditions of children. The EC food aid will be distributed primarily to families with children living in poverty;
- in France 1,1 million €, 27,5% of the EU structural funds are dedicated to policy to tackle poverty and social exclusion. It is said that it is mainly policies for youth employment that are concerned here;
- in Finland the NRP acknowledges the role played by EU Structural Funds and highlights the employment of people in the most difficult labour market position and the development of labour force skills as the main areas of priority in the use of EU structural funds in the future. Moreover, it acknowledges the importance of EU structural funds in promoting the employment and integration of immigrants;
- in Hungary the NRP highlights the use of EU Structural Funds to establish flexible day-care services for children under 3 years of age, to reduce the ratio of early school dropouts and to implement complex programmes for segregated slums, including the provision of human and housing factors;
- in Italy there is some rescheduling of Structural Funds to focus on social inclusion, children and young people (for example to early school services and actions against school drop-out and to focus on families that are in most difficulty);
- the Lithuanian NRP does indicate to some degree the extent to which EU Structural Funds will be used to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. For example, it is submitted that "when implementing the Programme "Youth Policy Implementation", continuous international, national and regional policy promoting active participation of young people in civil life is being developed. 12 measures will be implemented in 2013. A part of these measures will be financed from the structural funds;
- in Portugal the promotion of social inclusion and the fight against poverty is one of the main referred objectives of the next round of structural funds (as well as education). Child Poverty is not specifically referred, only the "most vulnerable groups", which includes children. The education objective also refers to the promotion of conditions to attain the mandatory education (12th grade) and the reduction of early school leaving but details are non-existent;
- the Romanian NRP indicates that EU Structural Funds will be used for school dropout prevention and intervention, social integration of children / youth with disabilities etc.;
- the United Kingdom NRP indicates that European Social Fund helps to support the Social Justice strategy, including employment related support for troubled families, support for offenders and ex-offenders, and community grants for small voluntary and community organisations to help them reach disadvantaged people who are not working. In relation to Wales reference is made to previous EU

Structural funds and 2 projects focused on re-engaging young people into employment, training or education which came to an end in March 2013;

- the UK-Scotland NRP aims to use Structural Funds to tackle child poverty through supporting higher labour market participation among parents. Children in Scotland lobbied quite extensively on applying the structural funds to ECEC – the Minister advised that no specific allocation would be made, however this is not exactly ruled out but would probably need to connect to some employment related activity.

7. EXTENT OF MEANINGFUL STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

7.1 LIMITED CONSULTATION WITH EUROCHILD MEMBERS AND PARTNERS IN THE PREPARATION OF NRPS

Only a few Eurochild member and partner organisations (e.g. DK, EE, ES, NL, UKS) were consulted during the preparation of the NRP. For instance:

- in Denmark the text of the NRP was examined by the Danish EAPN through whom the Joint Council for Child Issues participated;
- in Estonia the Ministries preparing the documents (primarily the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education) have conducted wide-scale discussions of matters pertaining to children's poverty, involving various organisations active in child welfare, incl. the Estonian Union for Child Welfare;
- in the Netherlands the concept text was open to NGOs for consultation but the improvements are not visible;
- in Spain while not directly consulted, Eurochild's partner had some meetings with government representatives to reinforce the necessary presence the child poverty in the NRP and remind the Recommendation n^o 7 of the Commission;
- in Luxembourg Eurochild's partner was invited to one stakeholder meeting organised by the Ministry of Family, participation in working groups on minimum income, homelessness and participated in one meeting organised by the Ministry of Economy, but there was no proper preparation and so the meeting was cancelled after ½ hour;
- in UK-Scotland Eurochild member is now routinely included in any consultation activity the Scottish Government is having with stakeholders on the NRP.

Most Eurochild members and partners (e.g. CZ, DE, EL, FR, FI, HU, IT, LT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UKE, UKNI, UKW) were not consulted during the preparation of the NRP. However, sometimes other NGOs were consulted.

7.2 NO CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN

There is no evidence of any specific efforts being made to consult with children in the preparation of the NRP in most Member States.

7.3 UNEVEN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE IMPORTANCE OF STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Several governments have consulted fairly widely with stakeholders in the preparation of NRPs even if not specifically with children's organisations. For instance:

- in Denmark the NRP text was submitted to NGOs before it was finalised;
- in France the national council on poverty and social exclusion was consulted, in which some NGOs participate, including CNAPE partners, but no organization specialised in children's issues. The NRP emphasises more on the involvement of local authorities to implement the measures;
- Germany consulted with representatives of employers, trade unions, businesses, SMEs, local authorities, welfare organisations and the national anti-poverty network and platform for the social sector at local level;
- the Irish NRP details the establishment of the Social Inclusion Forum, which is a Government-sponsored body to monitor progress on poverty and social inclusion with the participation of national and local stakeholders. Before the Forum, some participating NGOs – EAPN and the Community Workers Cooperative – consulted at local level with people experiencing poverty as well as community and voluntary groups working with people experiencing poverty;
- consultation with stakeholders is a stated commitment of the Scottish Government though it isn't specifically referenced in the NRP.

While several Member States acknowledge the importance of stakeholder involvement this is often rather underdeveloped. For instance:

- even though the Finnish NRP acknowledges the role of social partners and non-governmental organizations especially in improving young people's labour market situation, its importance is not sufficiently emphasised;
- in Hungary, even though the importance of stakeholder involvement is acknowledged, children, service receivers, etc. were not consulted during the preparation. NGOs should have a bigger role in the preparation as well, not only the « chosen » ones who are loyal to the government;
- in Romania, although the responsibilities of the stakeholders are mentioned, unfortunately the importance of their involvement is not highlighted;
- in Sweden stakeholder involvement is narrowly focussed on partners in the labour market;

In many cases (e.g. CZ, EL, LT, PL, PT, SI, UK) there is no recognition of the involvement of other stakeholders apart from state agencies. For instance, in the United Kingdom the NRP, while emphasising that the Government consults widely on policy development as a matter of course and that the success of Europe 2020 depends on substantial public engagement, is of itself not subject to formal consultation because it draws on publicly available information. Also although the NRP includes a small number of case studies showing stakeholder involvement, none of these relate to promoting the social inclusion of children.

SUMMARY TABLES

TABLE 1

Summary of Eurochild's members and partners views on how each of the six key issues identified by Eurochild are addressed in the 2013 NRP and whether this was better, the same or worse than in 2012

Key issue	How well do you think that this issue is addressed in your country's 2013 National Reform Programme (NRP)?			Do you think that this issue is addressed better or worse in your country's 2013 National Reform Programme (NRP) than in 2012?		
	Very well	Somewhat	Little/Not at all	Better	The same	Worse
1. Political weight given to child poverty and social exclusion		CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, NL, PT, RO, SK, UKS	EL, FI, LT, LU, PL, SE, SI, UKE, UKNI, UKW	DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, SK	CZ, DE, FI, LT, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, UKNI, UKS, UKW	UKE
2. Adoption of a comprehensive and child rights approach		CY, CZ, EE, ES, SE, UKS	DE, DK, EL, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, UKE UKNI, UKW	ES,	CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, UKE, UKNI, UKS, UKW	
3. Impact of the crisis on children, especially children in vulnerable situations		CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, HU, IE, LT, PL, RO, SI, SK, UKS	CZ, DK, FI, FR, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UKE, UKNI, UKW	ES, FR, IE, SI, UKS	CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, FI, HU, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, SE, SK, UKE	UKNI, UKW
4. Integrated approach to Europe 2020 Strategy	CZ, DE,	CY, EE, HU, IT, LT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UKS	DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, NL, PL, PT, UKE, UKNI, UKW	EE, ES, IT, SK	CZ, DE, DK, EL, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, UKE, UKS, UKW	UKNI
5. Use of EU money in support of children's inclusion and well-being	HU, RO,	CY, DE, EE, ES, FR, IT, UKS	CZ, DK, EL, FI, IE, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, UKE, UKNI, UKW	FR, IT,	CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, UKE, UKNI, UKS	UKW
6. Extent of meaningful stakeholder involvement	UKS	DE, DK, HU, IE, FR, LU, NL, PL, RO	CY, CZ, EL, EE, ES, FI, LT, PT, SE, SI, SK, UKE, UKNI, UKW	DE, IE, LU, SK	CZ, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, HU, LT, NL, PL, SE, SI, UKE, UKS, UKW	UKNI

TABLE 2

Eurochild’s members assessment of whether there is any evidence that the Commission’s Social Investment Package and Recommendation on Investing in children has had any impact on the preparation of the 2013 NRP

Extent of impact that the European Commission’s Social Investment Package (SIP) and, in particular, the Recommendation on investing in children have had on the preparation of the 2013 NRP		
NRP		
Significant impact	Slight impact	No impact
FR	CY, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, PT, SK	CZ, DE*, LT, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, UKE, UKNI, UKS, UKW

* in the case of Germany the SIP is assessed as having a significant impact on developing a social investment approach but no impact in relation to the Recommendation on Investing in children.

ⁱ Guideline 9: Improving the quality and performance of education and training systems at all levels and increasing participation in tertiary or equivalent education

In order to ensure access to quality education and training for all and to improve educational outcomes, Member States should invest efficiently in education and training systems notably to raise the skill level of the EU’s workforce, allowing it to meet the rapidly changing needs of modern labour markets and society at large. In line with the lifelong learning principles, action should cover all sectors (from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational education and training, as well as adult learning) taking into account also learning in informal and non-formal contexts. Reforms should aim to ensure the acquisition of the key competencies that every individual needs for success in a knowledge-based economy, notably in terms of employability in line with the priorities mentioned in guideline 4. International mobility for learners and teachers should be encouraged. Steps should also be taken to ensure that learning mobility for young people and teachers becomes the norm. Member States should improve the openness and relevance of education and training systems, particularly by implementing national qualification frameworks enabling flexible learning pathways, and by developing partnerships between the worlds of education/training and work. The teaching profession should be made more attractive and attention should be paid to the initial education and the continuous professional development of teachers. Higher education should become more open to non-traditional learners and participation in tertiary or equivalent education should be increased. With a view to reducing the number of young people not in employment, education, or training, Member States should take all necessary steps to prevent early school leaving.

The EU headline target, on the basis of which Member States will set their national targets, taking into account their relative starting positions and national circumstances, will aim to reduce drop out rates to less than 10 %, and increase the share of 30-34 year-olds having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40 % [1].

Guideline 10: Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty

The extension of employment opportunities is an essential aspect of Member States’ integrated strategies to prevent and reduce poverty and to promote full participation in society and economy. Appropriate use of the European Social Fund and other EU funds should be made to that end. Efforts should concentrate on ensuring equal opportunities, including through access for all to high quality, affordable, and sustainable services, in particular in the social field. Public services (including online services, in line with guideline 4) play an important role in this respect. Member States should put in place effective anti-discrimination measures. Empowering people and promoting labour market participation for those furthest away from the labour market while preventing in-work poverty will help fight social exclusion. This would require enhancing social protection systems, lifelong learning and comprehensive active inclusion policies to create opportunities at different stages of people’s lives and shield them from the risk of exclusion, with special attention to women. Social protection systems, including pensions and access to healthcare, should be modernised and fully deployed to ensure adequate income support and services — thus providing social cohesion — whilst remaining financially sustainable and encouraging participation in society and in the labour market.

Benefit systems should focus on ensuring income security during transitions and reducing poverty, in particular among groups most at risk from social exclusion, such as one-parent families, minorities including the Roma, people with disabilities, children and young people, elderly women and men, legal migrants and the homeless. Member States should also actively promote the social economy and social innovation in support of the most vulnerable. All measures should also aim at promoting gender equality.

The EU headline target, on the basis of which Member States will set their national targets, taking into account their relative starting conditions and national circumstances, will aim at promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty by aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion [2].

[1] The European Council emphasises the competence of Member States to define and implement quantitative targets in the field of education.

[2] The population is defined as the number of persons who are at risk of poverty and exclusion according to three indicators (at risk of poverty; material deprivation; jobless household), leaving Member States free to set their national targets on the basis of the most appropriate indicators, taking into account their national circumstances and priorities.