

Call for an EU Recommendation on Child Poverty and Child Well-being June 2010

Belgian Presidency of the European Union

Background Paper to the EU Presidency Conference:
Child Poverty and Child Well-Being

2-3 September 2010



Acknowledgements

This paper will be used as a background note to the Belgian EU Presidency Conference on 2-3 September 2010 on child poverty and child well-being. It aims to stimulate discussion around a future EU Recommendation on child poverty and child well-being, rather than being a fully exhaustive inventory of all EU policies that impact on child poverty and well-being. Nonetheless it aims to draw attention to important synergies across different EU policies and programmes and provide an overall framework for future work on child poverty and child well-being.

The paper has been requested by the Belgian Presidency of the European Union, in collaboration with UNICEF, Eurochild and the European Commission and is based on an original draft written by Sandy Ruxton, an independent expert on children's rights. The authors have also drawn heavily on the work of Hugh Frazer, Eric Marlier and Ides Nicaise, especially on the chapter on child poverty in the study "*A social inclusion roadmap for Europe 2020*" they have prepared for the 2010 Belgian EU Presidency. The authors are extremely grateful to each person having contributed to the writing of this paper.

Executive summary

The paper has been requested by the Belgian Presidency of the European Union, in collaboration with UNICEF, Eurochild and the European Commission and is based on an original draft written by Sandy Ruxton, an independent expert on children's rights. The authors have also drawn heavily on the work of Hugh Frazer, Eric Marlier and Ides Nicaise, especially on the chapter on child poverty in the study "A social inclusion roadmap for Europe 2020" they have prepared for the 2010 Belgian EU Presidency. This paper aims to pave the way for an EU Recommendation on child poverty and well-being. It will form the basis of discussions at the EU Presidency Conference on 2-3 September 2010 gathering decision-makers, policy makers, practitioners, experts and children and parents with experience of poverty.

The paper and the following discussions will feed into planned actions of the European Commission in the coming months, notably a Communication on the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion and a Staff Working Document on Child Poverty and Well-Being.

Consistent with previous policy analyses at EU level, the paper argues that child poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that requires a multi-dimensional response. Efforts at EU level to tackle child poverty therefore need to work hand-in-hand with a wide range of EU policy areas notably employment, gender equality, education, youth, regional development, health and child protection – that must then be mirrored at the national and regional level. To facilitate this coordination, this paper highlights some of the main political, legislative and financial initiatives at EU level that contribute directly or indirectly to reducing child poverty and promoting well-being. It reflects a desire that Member States too address child poverty through far reaching, integrated policy strategies that take account of all aspects of child well-being.

EU coordination and monitoring of Member State action to tackle child poverty and promote child well-being should continue to take place within the Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC), as this framework provides the most effective tools for policy convergence, peer review, benchmarking and mutual learning. The paper proposes that the OMC and its tools be further reinforced through the adoption of an EU Recommendation to give a much needed boost to Member States action.

The policy recommendations outlined in the paper are underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the universally accepted set of standards which set out the protection, provision and participation rights of all children and how they can be achieved. All EU Member States have ratified the Convention and are required to report on its implementation every five years. With the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009, the protection of children's rights is now an explicit objective of the European Union. It is crucial that the UNCRC, and all the processes attached to it, inform efforts to tackle child poverty at EU, national and regional levels.

Europe's future economic, social and political development depends on the extent to which its children grow up happy, healthy, well-educated, safe and self-confident. Childhood is short but nonetheless the most influential period of the human life cycle. Children who have missed school, lacked good health and nutrition, or lacked a supportive protective environment may be relegated to the margins of Europe's society for the rest of their lives. By investing in children and families, governments can help break the cycle that traps children in the same poverty their parents' experience. Breaking that chain in childhood means Europe can achieve an overall reduction in poverty in society by preventing a new, upcoming generation of poor and disadvantaged.

This policy initiative must be seen in the context of the on-going effects of the economic crisis which is putting heavy pressure on budgets. The crisis also brings into sharp relief the risks of not investing in more equal societies. By putting the youngest members of society at the top of the political agenda, EU leaders will give an important signal of their true commitment to an 'inclusive' Europe.

This paper sets out the rationale for an EU Recommendation on child poverty and well-being. It provides suggestions on what such a Recommendation could contain in terms of policy objectives and it outlines the main governance issues related to implementation of a Recommendation through the OMC. Finally, it gives a road map of follow-up action.

Contents

1.	Setting the Context	6
2.	Why A Recommendation on Child Poverty and Well-Being?	8
3.	A Framework for EU Action on Child Poverty and Child Well-Being	13
3.1	Adequate Resources	15
3.1.1	Income and Benefits	15
3.1.2	Reconciling Employment and Family Life	18
3.2	Access to Services	21
3.2.1	Early Childhood	21
3.2.2	Education and Training	24
3.2.3	Health Care	28
3.2.4	Environment/Housing	31
3.2.5	Child Protection and Social Services	34
3.3	Active Participation of Children and Young People	37
3.3.1	Children's Right to Be Heard	37
3.3.2	Participation of Children in Social, Recreational, Cultural, Sporting and Civic Activities	40
4.	The Way Forward	43
4.1	Governance and Implementation	43
4.2	Roadmap of Actions	45
	Annexes	47
	References	52



1. Setting the Context

There are over 100 million children and young people aged 0-18 in Europe and at least 20 million of them are at-risk-of poverty, with the risk of even more falling into poverty as the effects of the recent economic crisis continue to take hold. Even before the crisis, the numbers of children at-risk-of poverty were unacceptably high, with 20% of children living at-risk-of-poverty compared to 16% of the population as a whole^{1,2}. Although the effects are uneven, the economic crisis is further exacerbating poverty rates, with a pronounced impact on children and young people, due to cuts in income support and child benefits, to cuts in services directly affecting them (e.g. health, education), increasing unemployment and insecurity at work (both of young people and their parents), and increasing demands on child protection services.

This is the context for a Europe where for the first time in the EU's history the protection of children's rights has become an objective of the Union - a change introduced by the Lisbon Treaty which also makes combating social exclusion and discrimination and promoting solidarity between generations key objectives of the Union. Together with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights provisions on children's rights, this gives the EU a strong mandate to protect and to promote children's rights, complementing the ratification of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) by all EU Member States. An EU approach to child poverty and well-being must be framed within these overall Lisbon Treaty objectives.

The Commission's Communication on the Europe 2020 Strategy³ sets the political vision for the next ten years, building on the objectives of the Lisbon Treaty. It proposes a growth model that is 'smart', 'green' and 'inclusive'. Within the 'inclusive growth' strand, the Commission proposes a flagship initiative on poverty and a specific target on poverty reduction. The new Europe 2020 Strategy provides an important opportunity to adopt a systematic, comprehensive EU approach to tackling child poverty⁴ and child well being⁵ as a key political priority for the Union.

The Open Method of Coordination on social inclusion and social protection (the 'Social OMC') has proven to be an important instrument for achieving these objectives. It is currently under revision. It is crucial that the architecture of the new Europe 2020 Strategy reinforces this instrument and creates a space for child poverty and well-being to be addressed systematically and coherently over time and across the EU. A comprehensive EU 'Recommendation on Child Poverty and Child Well-being' will provide an important boost to this work by setting out common principles, supporting common objectives and monitoring frameworks, facilitating mutual learning and exchange.



2. Why A Recommendation on Child Poverty and Well-Being?

Reducing poverty and social exclusion and promoting greater social inclusion have been **key EU policy priorities** since 2000. At the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000 the Heads of State established the EU Social Inclusion Process, with the aim of *‘making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010’*⁶. Since the Lisbon Council, the issue of the poverty and social exclusion experienced by children has emerged as an increasingly important issue. EU Heads of Government have repeatedly agreed political commitments to tackle child poverty and social exclusion:

- *“Social inclusion policies should be pursued by the Union and the Member States, with its multifaceted approach, focusing on target groups such as children in poverty”* (European Council Presidency Conclusions, 23 March 2005)
- In the March 2006 Presidency Conclusions, the European Council asked the Member States *“to take necessary measures to rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty, giving all children equal opportunities, regardless of their social background”*⁷.
- *“The European Council stresses the need to fight poverty and social exclusion especially child poverty, and to give all children equal opportunities”* (European Council Presidency Conclusions, 8/9 March 2007)
- *“Member States would aim in particular at pursuing poverty reduction and social cohesion, through reinforced comprehensive strategies to combat and prevent poverty and social exclusion of children, including strengthened provision of accessible and affordable quality child care...”* (EPSCO Council, Key Messages Paper to the Spring European Council, 9 March 2009)

The **added value of EU involvement** in fighting child poverty and promoting child well-being is increasingly clear:

- First, the EU provides an arena (the Social OMC) and institutionalised framework at EU level for Member States to engage in debate and exchange good practice on child poverty and well-being to encourage mutual learning, through important EU-funded activities such as research, networking, training, and data-collection.
- Second, through such exchange, Member States can learn what works and what doesn’t and build a stronger evidence-base and be more efficient in their policy reforms.
- Third, by setting agreed EU benchmarks and indicators, Member States have a concrete goal that can help motivate action using the lessons learned on policy reform. The preparation of National Action Plans (NAPs)/inclusion has encouraged many Member States to develop more strategic and comprehensive approaches.
- Fourth, the EU can provide important leadership and encouragement through monitoring and review of national policy and outcomes.

Yet, in spite of the political attention and wide range of initiatives on child poverty and well-being already taken at EU and Member State levels, further follow up is needed to ensure real progress. The rationale for further and stronger EU action is clear:

- Child poverty levels remain unacceptably high and are increasing in some countries. *“Child poverty and social exclusion is **not a peripheral or residual problem** that will just disappear with economic growth. Indeed, some of the factors linked to child poverty and social exclusion such as the growth in lone parent families and the high levels of child poverty and social exclusion amongst immigrants and some ethnic minorities serve to emphasise its likely persistence unless appropriate policies to promote the social inclusion of all children are developed.”*⁸
- Children who grow up in poverty or social exclusion are less likely to reach their full potential and they will have a higher risk of being unemployed and living in persistent poverty as adults. And yet **demographic trends** in the EU, with declining birth rates and ageing, has led to a growing awareness of the need to maximise the EU’s future human resources. Countries need to maximise the future potential of *all their children* and thus child poverty and social exclusion need to be efficiently addressed now.⁹
- Investing in children **makes good economic and political sense**. The EU Social OMC has reinforced evidence from international studies that high levels of child poverty and social exclusion lead to higher economic and social costs for countries and in contrast, investing in children living in poverty leads to very real economic benefits and significant savings in social costs over the long-term¹⁰. It is much more costly and less successful to try and redress the causes of poverty and social exclusion at a later stage.¹¹
- The EU process has served to highlight a number of **particular groups of children who are at high risk of more severe or extreme poverty** including children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities (especially the Roma), young asylum seekers and immigrants, children experiencing abuse, maltreatment or neglect, children whose parents have mental health problems, children in care, homeless children and children who are the victims of domestic violence or the victims of trafficking, children living in very poor and isolated rural areas lacking many basic facilities and children living in large shanty estates on the periphery of major urban areas. From the analysis of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, it appears that the position of children of migrant families and some ethnic minorities is a growing issue that must be addressed through increased reinforcement of inclusion and anti-discrimination policies.¹²
- Whilst there have been strong political statements by EU Heads of States to prioritise child poverty, this has not translated into consistent resources, action, targets and monitoring across all EU member states. Despite agreement on a number of important policy recommendations in the Social Protection Committee (SPC)¹³ report on child poverty and well-being in 2008, there has been **no systematic review** of whether Member States have implemented the recommendations, and if so, how. **Without follow up, huge differences in outcomes remain.**

Progress on child poverty *is achievable* within Europe – that has been demonstrated. Several Member States have made significant progress over the past decade. The **lessons** from Member State experience and EU work to date are clear: **general poverty reduction targets (such as the target proposed in the EU 2020 Strategy) are not sufficient for reducing child poverty: child-specific, multi-dimensional approaches, underpinned by child rights and supported by specific targets are needed, together with the political will to put these clear recommendations into action.**¹⁴

Box 1: Selection Of EU Initiatives on Child Poverty and Child Well-Being

- ✓ In 2007, **child poverty and well-being** was identified as a **thematic priority of the OMC on social protection and social inclusion**. Several important analyses and policy reviews were carried out as part of the year including:
 - A '*Task-Force on Child Poverty and Child Well-Being*' was established by the Indicators Sub-Group of the SPC that led to the adoption of the report "Child poverty and well-being in the EU: current status and way forward" in 2008¹⁵. The report highlights not only the range of indicators that already exist at EU level (e.g. age breakdowns of poverty risk, children living in jobless households, indicators in relation to education), but also the need for broader 'child well-being' indicators.
 - Member States responded to a *Questionnaire on poverty and social exclusion of children in the EU Member States*, providing detailed information on the specific policies related to tackling child poverty and social exclusion.
 - The EU's *Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion* has produced reports on child poverty and social inclusion for each Member State¹⁶ and an overall synthesis report¹⁷.
 - Member State governments took part in a peer review of national policies and practices targeted at child poverty and well-being.
 - The *2008 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion* included a Commission supporting document which contains a detailed section on tackling and preventing child poverty and social exclusion¹⁸.
- ✓ Increasing attention is given to age disaggregated data and indicators including¹⁹:
 - *The 'EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions' (EU-SILC)* are a valuable source of data on child poverty and well-being. A special module was added to the 2009 wave, asking parents about the well-being of their children.
 - A *2010 report by TARKI/Applica*, on behalf of the European Commission, identifies a set of comparative indicators to reflect the multi-dimensional nature of child well-being. This will feed into the work of the Indicators Sub-Group of the SPC with a double objective: a) filling in the "child well-being" slot in the EU social inclusion portfolio with a limited number of indicators; and b) agreeing a larger set of indicators which the European Commission and Member States will be able to use for in-depth national or EU reporting on the situation of children.
- ✓ In the context of the OMC on social inclusion and social protection, the **EU funds** many projects and networks focusing on child poverty and well-being including:
 - European networks addressing child poverty such as Eurochild, the European Social Network, the European Federation for Street Children, etc.
 - Transnational projects, peer reviews conferences bringing together government officials as well as other key stakeholders.
- ✓ 2010 has been designated '**European Year to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion**'. A Communication on the European Platform against poverty and social exclusion as announced in the Europe 2020 Strategy will be published in autumn 2010, together with a Staff Working Document on Child Poverty and Well-Being.

The EU has drawn particular attention to the situation Roma. A significant part of the 10-12 million Roma in Europe live in extreme marginalisation in both rural and urban areas and in very poor

socio-economic conditions. The discrimination, social exclusion and segregation which Roma face are mutually reinforcing. They often face limited access to high quality education, difficulties in integration into the labour market, correspondingly low income levels, and poor health. Across the different Roma communities, women and children are exposed to particularly high risks and have been highlighted as requiring specific attention. At the EU level attention to Roma (and members of other groups who share similar socio-economic circumstances) will be mainstreamed into broader policy initiatives, recognising that any progress which can be achieved in the area of Roma inclusion represents progress in the inclusion of all ethnic minorities in the EU.



3. A Framework for EU Action on Child Poverty and Child Well-Being

Child poverty and social exclusion are a denial of children's fundamental human rights, which can affect their development today and undermine the realisation of their full potential in the future. An approach to poverty based on fundamental rights shifts the focus from needs and charity to ensuring socially and legally guaranteed entitlements for children, and an accompanying emphasis on the duties and obligations of Member States to provide or organise those entitlements. This approach is consistent with European values, policies and legislation – based on a strong commitment to social protection and fundamental rights.

Viewed through a lens of children's rights, child poverty is understood as multi-dimensional, encompassing not only income deprivation, but also other forms of deprivation and loss of dignity – lack of access to appropriate housing, education, health services, and a more general lack of opportunity in society. The dimensions of disadvantage and deprivation are interrelated and interdependent – for example, if a child is living in overcrowded accommodation, located in a poor environment, this may contribute to poor health, low educational attainment and undermine life chances²⁰. Conversely, access to sufficient family income, supportive care, decent housing, and good quality health care, will have a positive impact on a child's life, both now and into the future²¹.

Given the inter-dependent nature of the problem, child poverty and well-being must be addressed in an integrated way across a range of policy areas. Such an integrated approach requires formal arrangements to coordinate the efforts of all actors horizontally (across different government departments) and vertically (between different levels of government). If no such mechanisms are put in place, policies are likely to be fragmented and less efficient and there is a danger that the impact of policies on children is ignored or under-valued²².

Box 2: Links to the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child

In July 2006 a European Commission Communication paved the way for the development of an EU strategy on the rights of the child. It committed to developing *“a comprehensive strategy to ensure the EU contributes to promoting and safeguarding children's rights in all its internal and external actions and supports the efforts of Member States in this field”*. By the end of 2010 the Commission will adopt a new Communication on the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child based on a public consultation and will set an overarching framework for internal and external EU action on children's rights.

Work on child poverty and well-being will be reinforced by a clear and ambitious EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and vice versa. The two areas of work should be consistent and

coherent. The child rights framework provides a useful framework that reinforces the multi-dimensional approach to poverty and well-being. The EU Child Rights Strategy can provide key principles (such as the best interest of the child and a strong focus on non-discrimination), tools, resources and expertise to inform EU cooperation on child poverty and well-being from a child rights perspective, and support the mainstreaming of child poverty and well-being perspective in other areas of EU policy making. Likewise, fighting child poverty and promoting child well-being is a key priority for achieving children's rights in the EU. The proposed governance structure and follow up on child poverty and well-being such as the indicators and monitoring framework developed within the Social OMC to better understand the situation on well-being of children within the EU will provide important inspiration and models for other similarly joined up approaches to children's rights across the EU.

This Call for an EU Recommendation proposes a coherent framework for addressing child poverty and child well-being, taking a rights-based approach. It draws upon the analysis of Member States policies on child poverty and well-being, and existing EU work on the development of indicators and benchmarking. The proposed framework is inspired by the principles agreed in the Commission's 'Recommendation on active inclusion' (2008)²³, and the substantive policy recommendations of the Network of Independent Experts Report 2007²⁴.

Summary of the Proposed Framework For Action

1. Ensure that children grow up in families with **adequate resources** to meet their essential needs.
Two policy areas:
 - Income and benefits
 - Reconciling employment and family life
2. Ensure children, while growing up, have **access to the services and opportunities** that will enhance their present and future well-being and enable them to reach their full potential, with particular attention to the **most vulnerable children**
Five policy areas:
 - Early childhood
 - Education
 - Health care
 - Environment and housing
 - Child protection and social services
3. Promote the **active participation of children and young people**
Two policy areas:
 - Children's right to be heard
 - Participation of children in social, recreational, cultural, sporting and civic activities

The following section explores these nine policy areas in relation to: their link to child poverty and child well-being; existing work in relation to the issue at the European level; the gaps in the legislative and policy framework; the availability of indicators, targets and benchmarks; the recommendations for taking the work forward.

3.1 Adequate Resources

3.1.1 Income and Benefits

A range of factors affect whether or not children live in income poverty, in particular the labour market attachment of parents, and the impact of cash transfers (allowances paid to children/families and/or reductions in tax payments). Although the unemployment of parents does not automatically result in child poverty, there is a close link between child poverty rates and adult joblessness as earnings from work are the main source of income for the majority of parents. There is also an association between low wages and child poverty rates, with in-work poverty an important cause of low income among families.

As stated by Frazer and Marlier *“the most effective approaches to ensuring an adequate income involve a combination of policies which increase parents’ access to work and which provide generous child income support and income support for all parents... neither employment nor income support measures on their own are sufficient”*²⁵.

Social transfers (excluding pensions) have an important impact on reducing child poverty. In the best performing countries (Sweden and Finland) social transfers reduce the child poverty risk by over 60%. For the EU as a whole, the child poverty risk is reduced by 39% as a result of social transfers. The effectiveness of social transfers depends on the level of government spending on family and social benefits and the extent to which children in low income families are specifically targeted.

Box 3: Selection of EU Initiatives on Income Poverty

- ✓ In December 2008, the European Council endorsed the common principles and guidelines identified in the Commission’s Recommendation on the *Active Inclusion of People Excluded from the Labour Market*, October 2008. Following this:
 - The EU Network of National Independent Experts has produced 27 country reports on Member States’ minimum income schemes. October 2009²⁵.
 - European Parliament adopted a (non-legislative) Resolution on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (May 2009).
- ✓ The *Commission’s Communication - Promoting Solidarity Between the Generations* (COM (2007) 244 final) identifies support for families and parenthood as a key policy objective, including compensation for the direct and indirect costs associated with the family (benefits or tax relief for those responsible for children or other dependent persons). A follow-up study²⁶ looked at all available knowledge on:
 - the costs (to parents) of parenthood and of raising children in European Countries;
 - the effectiveness, in the short and long term, of various policy measures in avoiding or compensating for those costs;
 - the impact of different policy instruments aimed at supporting families according to various policy objectives, e.g. achieving family projects, reconciling family and working life, reducing child poverty, raising the levels of education and well being of children, and increasing equal opportunities;
 - the wider economic and social costs and benefits of policy interventions in support of families.

i. Policy Assessment

Minimum Income Coverage Is Still Inadequate

Most Member States have some form of minimum income scheme(s) for people of working age which aim to ensure a minimum standard of living for individuals and their dependents when they have no other means of financial support. All the trends noted below will affect any children in these households, either directly or indirectly²⁷.

- These currently **vary widely** in their coverage, comprehensiveness and effectiveness, with many falling short of sustaining a dignified life²⁸.
- Recent years have seen a clear trend towards the **tightening of eligibility conditions**, with more stringent requirements for work availability, and increased sanctions for non-compliance. There are also indications of a **deterioration of benefit adequacy**, with benefits losing ground in relation to wages.
- Some of those on low incomes – homeless people, refugees and asylum-seekers – still have **limited access (or no access at all)** to minimum income schemes.

Income Transfer Options Could Be More Child Sensitive

A range of policy measures can be employed to transfer income to families with children. Financial support to families with children may be provided through:

- Means-tested benefits targeted on lower income families;
- Tax concessions can be used to increase the disposable income of families that are subject to income tax;
- Transfers may also be targeted via benefits that depend on the labour market status of parents;
- Cash support can be guaranteed to all children by unconditional tax credits and/or universal child benefits.

The means by which child-related support is channelled has an important effect on its distribution between different kinds of households. The Social Protection Committee report on child poverty and well being²⁹ argued that, in principle, shifting support from taxes to benefits redistributes income to people in poverty. Tax concessions tend to go to better off families, however they have fewer problems of non take-up than means-tested benefits. Means-tested benefits frequently also have a stigmatising effect, and are likely to reduce incentives for claimants to move into work (the ‘poverty trap’) – potentially contributing to longer-term unemployment.

Universal Child Benefits Should Be Offered

These benefits may at first appear more expensive when compared to targeted benefits but must be measured in the broader context of the fully documented cost of administering targeted benefits and in light of their demonstrated advantages: they avoid the poverty trap, they are simple to administer, can be paid directly to the main carer (usually the mother), and can help to provide a ladder out of poverty if paid at the same rate to parents whether in work or not. Such benefits are even more important in the current economic crisis when the poor and the near-poor often face the double burden of an inclusive economic crisis but exclusive recovery policies that may be difficult, if not impossible for them to access. Failure to preserve social spending and investments risks translating the effects of the crisis into permanent harm for children.

As stated by COFACE: “*The basic needs of children should be fully covered by universal child benefits, conceived as a right for all children. Each child should given his/her parents entitlement*”

*to receive child benefits, as from the first child, irrespective of his/her nationality, marital status, professional status and income. Child benefits should cover children's basic needs (food, housing, clothes, health, education) and therefore should be adjusted according to the child's age and the number of children. They must also be adjusted to cover specific needs (e.g. for children with disabilities, costs of transport, etc.) Child benefits should not be taken into account for means-tested benefits (e.g. minimum income, housing allowances etc.)."*³⁰

A Child's Perspective on Income Poverty Is Not Sufficiently Reflected

Income poverty affects children in many different ways. The solutions are achieved not only through improving household incomes. There are other policy interventions directly targeting children which ensure that children do not miss out on opportunities or are not disadvantaged due to a lack of financial means. This could include free school meals, and free access to leisure or cultural activities. More work could be developed to compare and contrast different policy approaches in particular how to avoid possible stigmatisation through targeted financial support.

ii. Monitoring Tools

Income Poverty Reduction Targets

At its June 2010 meeting the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council agreed to propose to the June 2010 European Council meeting that:

- A quantified target of the Europe 2020 Strategy should be to lift at least 20 million people from the risk of poverty and exclusion by 2020;
- Member States should be able to choose between the following three indicators depending on their national needs: (1) At-risk-of-poverty (i.e. people living with less than 60% of national median income); (2) Material deprivation (i.e. people who experience at least four out of nine defined deprivation situations); (3) People living in jobless households (i.e. population defined in relation to zero or very low work-intensity over a whole year) to reflect a dynamic perspective of poverty linked to situations of prolonged exclusion from the labour market.

The proposal is a disappointment for many social actors who had called for the EU to stick to its original proposal at a minimum: an overall EU target of 25% reduction in poverty levels by 2020 based on the relative poverty indicator - the most commonly used and understood tool for measuring and comparing poverty levels in the EU³¹.

However, even with overall poverty targets in place, this would not necessarily result in a parallel reduction of child poverty levels – as the current difference in poverty levels between the overall population and child population in Europe already demonstrates. A quantified target on child poverty is needed to focus attention to the specific action needed to address child poverty. In addition, given the limitations of the relative poverty indicator, such as the potential perverse effects of targeting those that are closest to the poverty line, any reduction target for child poverty must also be accompanied by a broader range of indicators, including flanking targets on reducing the poverty gap (that reflects the depth of poverty), the number of jobless households, and in-work poverty. Member States should be encouraged to adapt and adopt their own specific national targets on child poverty according to the particular challenges each country faces.

Other Dimensions of Material Deprivation

Other measures of material deprivation need to be analysed alongside income-related measures of poverty in order to have a deeper understanding of poverty. Eurostat's 2010 report on combating poverty and social exclusion³² covers an 'economic strain' or a 'durables strain', defined as the enforced inability (rather than the choice of not being able/having) to pay for at least three of the following items: unexpected expenses; one week annual holiday away from home; arrears (mortgage or rent payments, utility bills, or hire purchase instalments or other loan payments); a meal with meat or fish every other day; heating to keep the home adequately warm; a washing machine; a colour television; a telephone; or a car.

However these items, based on EU-SILC data, have been developed for adults and are not child-focused³³. In contrast, UNICEF's Report Card 7³⁴ refers to two sets of indicators: family affluence³⁵ and educational possessions³⁶, which are more child-centred and subjective indicators, and the TARKI/Applica Report also suggests other child-specific related indicators (e.g. access to educational resources). In 2009 a new wave of child related questions was asked in the EU-SILC survey, which should be used to form the starting basis of a child-specific deprivation index.

Policy Recommendations

- Countries which spend most on social benefits (excluding pensions) tend to have lowest child poverty levels. Government should improve child benefits as an expression of inter-generational solidarity, recognition of the inherent value of childhood and an investment in Europe's future.
- Universal child benefits are the most effective way of providing income support to families with children. They should be received automatically and coupled with targeted benefits for those most in need.
- Child sensitive income support also includes benefits targeted directly at children such as government provided child-trust funds, free books and education materials, free school meals, free access to leisure and cultural activities etc.

Monitoring Recommendations

- A quantified target on child poverty focuses attention on the specific actions needed to address child poverty. It can be adapted and adopted by Member States to set their own specific national targets on child poverty according to the particular challenges each country faces.
- A child-specific deprivation index to inform policy making, monitoring and reporting, should be based on disaggregation of commonly agreed indicators, the child related questions in the EU-SILC 2009 survey and qualitative research with children to better understand their perspectives.

3.1.2 Reconciling Employment and Family Life

Having a job remains the best safeguard against poverty. Nonetheless children's well-being depends on parents' jobs being sufficiently well-paid to lift families out of poverty and parents having enough quality time to spend with the children. A good work/life balance for parents is critical to the well-being of children and society, as both income poverty and 'time poverty'³⁷ can harm child development³⁸. Activation policies therefore need to take account of parents' primary responsibilities

towards their children's well-being throughout their childhood and extending beyond the immediate post-birth period. Precarious employment, unsociable working hours and low paid jobs can have a detrimental impact on child development.

Equality legislation, aimed primarily at ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market, have largely had a positive impact on children. These include directives on the health of pregnant women (1992)³⁹, on working time (1993)⁴⁰, and on parental leave (1996)⁴¹. However, the current economic crisis is reversing some of those equality gains, as women find it increasingly difficult to combine paid work with care responsibilities⁴².

Access to affordable, high-quality child care services is one of the most important barriers to taking up (or returning to) employment for mothers and has to date been seen predominantly as a labour market inclusion measure. These services are dealt with in the following section under services for children given the significant role that quality early child care can make in children's development – a dimension with far longer term significance for children and society that has been largely ignored until quite recently.

Box 4: Selection of EU Initiatives on Reconciling Employment and Family Life

- ✓ From 1986-96 the *Commission supported the European Network on Childcare and other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities*, which produced a range of publications on related topics⁴³.
- ✓ In October 2008 the European Commission proposed to revise maternity leave provision, increasing it to 18 weeks, of which six would have to be taken after the birth⁴⁴. This reform is generating considerable debate, with issues relating to pay, duration of leave and the protection of women on return to work proving to be major obstacles.
- ✓ A revised *Directive on Parental Leave 2009*⁴⁵ will give each working parent the right to at least four months leave after the birth or adoption of a child (up from three months now) of which one month will be non-transferable. The new rights will apply to all workers, regardless of their type of contract (e.g. fixed-term, part-time, agency workers), although the possibility of a qualification period of maximum one year is maintained. Government and employers/unions will also be obliged to assess the specific needs of parents of adopted children and children with a disability or long-term illness.
- ✓ EU heads of state and government, at the European Summit of 8 and 9 March 2007, decided to establish a *European Alliance for Families*⁴⁶. The aim of the Alliance is to create impulses for more family-friendly policies through exchanges of ideas and experience in the various Member States and to foster cooperation and fruitful learning from each other in the European Union.

i. Policy Assessment

Diversity of Leave Arrangements

Although coverage of maternity, paternity and parental leave is nearly universal, there is considerable diversity between Member States in the details, particularly in relation to parental leave (e.g.

length of leave, whether paid or unpaid (and if paid, at what level), flexibility in use (e.g. whether it can be part-time, or taken in blocks), and whether leave is a family or individual entitlement.

Lack of Coordination between Leave Arrangements and Child Care

There is a need to ensure that policies in relation to leave arrangements and early childhood services are complementary and coherent, and that policy development is ‘joined up’ effectively.

Failure of the Current Reconciliation Model to Accommodate Diversity of Family Circumstances

Greater attention should also be accorded to diversity within families beyond the typically defined nuclear family, taking into consideration issues such as atypical work patterns, household composition (e.g. lone parent families, large families, stepfamilies), the cultural backgrounds and expectations of different minority communities, and the needs of families with disabled adults and/or children.

ii. Monitoring Tools

The International Network on Leave Policies & Research publishes a regular international review of leave policies and research and supports cross-national analyses and monitoring of leave policies⁴⁷. The OECD has developed an on-line database on family outcomes and family policies with indicators for all OECD countries (covering all EU Member States except Cyprus). It brings together information from different OECD databases (for example, the OECD Social Expenditure Database, the OECD Benefits and Wages Database, or the OECD Education Database, and databases maintained by other (international) organisations). Information in the family database is categorised under four broad headings: (i) the structure of families, (ii) the labour market position of families, (iii) public policies for families and children (including income support, leave policies, care and education for very young children and out-of-school hours care), and (iv) child outcomes (including child health, child poverty, education/literacy, and societal participation)⁴⁸.

In its Report Card 8⁴⁹, UNICEF takes a child-centred approach to monitoring policies on child care and leave. It sets several minimum standards or benchmarks for parental leave that provide clear guidance based on a review of current policies in 25 countries: it recommends that on the birth of a child, one parent be entitled to leave of at least a year (to include pre-natal leave as is currently available in at least six Member States). A longer maternity leave period allows for closer mother/child bonding, and is crucial for the child physical and emotional development and well-being. Remuneration during leave is particularly important, especially for low income families who often need to return to work to cope with the increased expenses associated with the arrival of a new baby. For parents who are unemployed or self-employed, the income entitlement should not be less than the minimum wage or the level of social assistance.

Policy Recommendations

- Quality work for parents is crucial. Flexible working arrangements should be provided to enable parents to balance work and family commitments. Work arrangements should accommodate increasingly diverse household compositions.

- Leave arrangements for parents should be paid, universally accessible and offer flexibility to allow parents to respond to the best interests of their children over the course of their childhood. Leave arrangements should respect and support increasingly diverse household compositions.
- Parents should have access to affordable, accessible and high quality services to support them and their children. Services should accommodate the increasingly diverse work patterns of parents.

3.2 Access to Services

3.2.1 Early Childhood

Good quality childcare services help to promote social inclusion, as well as providing support for employment for parents or care givers and for gender equality. The May 2010 Council Conclusions on **the social dimension of education and training** stated that “[p]articipation in high-quality early childhood education and care, with highly skilled staff and adequate child-to-staff ratios, produces positive results for all children and has highest benefits for the most disadvantaged. Providing adequate incentives and support, adapting provision to needs and increasing accessibility can broaden the participation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

In general, however, EU activity in this area has tended to prioritise the needs of working parents and the labour market over those of children and is only more recently shifting to viewing early childhood care and education as a key intervention to promote better child development and better inclusion.

Box 5: A Selection of EU Initiatives On Early Childhood

- ✓ In 2002 the European Council in Barcelona set targets for the provision of childcare facilities under the broader agenda for economic growth and jobs – with the aim of raising employment rates for women and men. Member States should ‘*strive, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between three years old and mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under three years old*’⁵⁰. These targets were reiterated in the subsequent European Employment Strategy 2003, and the *Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (2006-10)* the Commission undertook to “support the achievement of the Barcelona targets on childcare facilities”.
- ✓ A Commission review of the Implementation of the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities (2008)⁵¹ concluded that, although some progress has been made, it was likely that most Member States would fail to reach the targets by 2010. Acknowledging that it has no direct powers in the field of childcare, the Commission commits to: monitoring the Barcelona objectives regularly as part of the Strategy for Growth and Employment, analysing the development of childcare facilities in the annual report on equal opportunities for women and men which the Commission submits to the Spring European Council; promoting exchanges of national experiences relating to childcare facilities; and encouraging research into working conditions in the pre-school childcare sector. The European Com-

mission's Expert Group on Gender and Employment Issues (EGGE) produced a study on the provision of child care services across 27 member states (March 2009)⁵².

- ✓ *Council of Ministers 'Conclusions (2009) on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training' ('ET 2020')⁵³ agreed a benchmark that 'at least 95 % of children between 4 years old and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education'.*
- ✓ *DG Education and Culture of the European Commission is increasingly addressing the issue of early years' education and care from the perspective of early child development. A European Symposium on improving early childhood education and care was organised in October 2008. An independent report was submitted to the European Commission by the NESSE networks of experts on early education and care, key lessons for policy makers, June 2009. The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency has produced a report on "Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities through Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe" January 2009⁵⁴.*
- ✓ *The Structural Funds have provided co-financing for measures to facilitate the reconciling of work with family life, including the construction of childcare facilities, the training of personnel and the provision of childcare services for parents seeking employment. Over the period 2007-2013 an estimated €0.5 billion from the Structural Funds and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development will be available for developing childcare facilities, while €2.4 billion will be available for funding measures to facilitate the access of women to employment and the reconciliation of working life with family life, including access to childcare.*

i. Policy Assessment

Insufficient Quality of Services for Children

Eurochild has argued that the Barcelona targets fail to address quality and ignore many of the essential elements of sound early childhood policy. These include the need to: regard young children as citizens with rights to protection, infant health care, and early education and care services; provide a social context in which early childhood services can be effective; adopt an inclusive concept of services from pre-natal to preschool; engage parents in all aspects of rearing their children; give attention to the training, pay and working conditions of staff, particularly in the childcare sector⁵⁵.

Childcare Services Operating on Outdated Concepts

It has also been suggested that the current policy focus on 'childcare services' at EU and Member State levels is limited and narrow. It both supports a long-standing and outmoded separation between childcare and early education services, and reinforces traditional perspectives (e.g. of services as substitutes for home care; of children as 'dependents'). Instead, a more effective approach would be to adopt an inclusive concept of services open to all children and families and providing for many purposes – including not only 'childcare', but also early education, family support, social inclusion, and participation⁵⁶.

Parents Face Barriers in Accessing Services

The Commission review argues that *‘a lot still needs to be done to achieve satisfactory levels of childcare provision, particularly for the under-3s’*. Moreover, *‘childcare facilities are not always financially affordable, and their opening hours are not always compatible with full-time employment or with jobs involving atypical hours’*... *‘There must also be a focus on improving the quality of childcare facilities, including ensuring that childcare workers are better trained and more highly valued’*⁵⁷.

A 2009 report on childcare services in Europe by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions⁵⁸ concurs, concluding that overall, the childcare sector is growing in the EU, but a lack of availability, high costs and inaccessibility of services often prevail. In particular, they highlight that families living in disadvantaged areas often face a number of problems in relation to childcare that lead to, or arise from, poverty and social exclusion. They suggest that successful out-of-school childcare in disadvantaged areas depends on public sector support, community involvement and joined-up services.

Lack of Emphasis on the Social Inclusion Potential of Early Childhood Education and Care

Early childhood education and care also offers enormous opportunities for societies to reduce poverty, inequality, and disadvantage. Educational disadvantage is strongly associated with home background and becomes measurable even before formal schooling begins: three-year-old children of more educated parents, for example, often have double the vocabulary of children from poorer, less educated homes and are significantly more likely to achieve higher qualifications by the age of 15.

Early childhood education and care can help reduce the educational, developmental and behavioural challenges faced by disadvantaged children. A significant body of research supports the idea that offering good quality early education and care to *all* children tends to reduce disadvantage. In a detailed review of the costs and benefits in OECD countries, for example, Canadian researchers Cleveland and Krashinsky found that: *“Although early childhood education and care benefits all children, much of the evidence suggests that the largest benefits flow to children from the most disadvantaged families... good childcare can compensate, at least partially, for a disadvantaged home life.”*⁵⁹ The potential for improving social integration through quality early childhood care and development is only just emerging on the EU agenda.

ii. Monitoring Tools

Although there are considerable methodological difficulties in comparing early year’s education and care across EU Member States, the European statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) now provide some detailed data on childcare services. Questions are asked about the use of formal childcare arrangements, the use of other arrangements and the number of hours per week. The EU-SILC data indicate that some countries have extensive formal arrangements (including education at pre-school and centre-based arrangements), whereas others rely more on other arrangements (such as childminders at home and/or family, friends or neighbours). Information on the use of childcare facilities, though informative, does not however answer the question of whether demand is fully met⁶⁰.

Comparisons of the quality of childcare are seriously hampered by the severe lack of harmonised statistics. As long ago as 1996, the European Commission’s Childcare Network published ‘Quality Targets in Services for Young Children’. Asked by the European Commission to *‘establish criteria for the definition of quality in childcare services’*, the Network started from the principles set out

in the Council's 1992 Recommendation, and framed 40 targets that it argued were achievable by all Member States over a 10 year period. The comprehensive set of targets is interdependent and is organised into nine areas: Policy; Finance; Levels and Types of Services; Education; Staff Child Ratios; Staff Employment and Training; Environment and Health; Parents and Community; and Performance. Unfortunately the targets were never adopted by the European Commission, although they remain relevant to the current discussion⁶¹.

UNICEF's Report Card 8⁶² suggests a set of 10 benchmarks intended to establish a common core of minimum standards for early childhood services for the OECD countries. The report acknowledges some limitations in the benchmarks (e.g. they represent minimum basic standards rather than a guarantee of high quality; they mainly relate to out-of-home centre based child care rather than informal care). On the other hand, they also reflect the availability of unambiguous, internationally comparable data. They cover: a minimum entitlement to paid parental leave; national plans with priority for disadvantaged children; a minimum level of childcare provision for under 3s; a minimum level of access for 4 year olds; minimum levels of training and education for staff; a minimum staff to child ratio; a minimum level of public funding; a low level of child poverty; and universal outreach.

At EU level, the Council of Ministers has, in addition to the 'Barcelona targets', recently agreed a benchmark of European average performance in relation to the participation of over-3s in early childhood education within its education and training strategy, however this is not considered a concrete target for individual countries to reach by 2020. *'Rather, Member States are invited to consider, on the basis of national priorities and whilst taking account of changing economic circumstances, how and to what extent they can contribute to the collective achievement of the European benchmarks through national actions'*⁶³. Whilst this formulation allows considerable scope for national flexibility, it potentially undermines the value and impact of the overall benchmark.

Policy Recommendations

- Early childhood should be recognized as a crucial stage in children's education, development and social integration, requiring public investment in services that are accessible to all, regardless of parent's labour market situation.
- Clear quality criteria should be set for early childhood services including professional qualifications, recognition, training, staff/child ratio, educational philosophy and values.

3.2.2 Education and Training

The potential role of education and training systems in breaking the cycle of poverty, social disadvantage and exclusion is recognized in the Council Conclusions of May 2010⁶⁴. It states that *'Education and training systems contribute significantly to fostering social cohesion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment in European societies. They have the potential to promote upward social mobility and to break the cycle of poverty, social disadvantage and exclusion. Their role could be further enhanced by adapting them to the diversity of citizens' backgrounds in terms of cultural richness, existing knowledge and competences, and learning needs'*.

In reality, education systems in many EU countries exacerbate social inequality and gaps in education outcomes between children of different socio-economic backgrounds remains significant. Fac-

tors that may prevent social mobility through education include: discriminatory practices, school segregation, too rigid an emphasis on academic achievement, inadequate teacher training and support, inability of the education systems to accommodate diversity and individual pathways.

As noted in Frazer and Marlier (2010): “*tackling educational disadvantage and improving access to education is particularly important both in order to combat the negative consequences of poverty and social exclusion on the child’s development and in order to empower children and break the intergenerational inheritance of disadvantage. In this regard, four aspects stand out for policy attention: the importance of early childhood education and development; the need to develop strategies to tackle school drop outs and educational disadvantage; the importance of integrating minorities (e.g. ethnic minorities, migrants, children with a disability) in the school system; and the need to reduce costs and financial barriers to participating in education.*”

Box 6: A Selection of EU Initiatives on Education

- ✓ The Europe 2020 Strategy adopted by the European Council in June agrees two headline targets on education and training. It proposes to reduce school drop-out rates to 10% by 2020 (the average rate across the EU in 2008 was 14.8%) and increase the share of the population having completed tertiary or equivalent education to 40% (currently 31%). To support achievement of the EU2020 target on early school leavers, a specific initiative is planned. This could be adoption of a Council Recommendation by the end of 2010.
- ✓ *The strategic framework for European cooperation on education and training (ET2020)* identifies the promotion of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship as one of its four strategic objectives and defines five European benchmarks that place a strong emphasis on achieving equity. A new unit has been created in DG Education and Culture under the directorate for policy coordination dedicated to equal opportunities and equity in education and training.
- ✓ Cooperation between Member States in the field of education and training takes place through an *Open Method of Coordination* cross-cutting all areas of life-long learning from early years to adult education. The mutual learning is organised through ‘peer learning’ clusters⁶⁵. They include a cluster focusing on access and social inclusion in life-long learning⁶⁶ and another focusing on improving the quality of teacher education. Among the recent outputs from this peer learning activity is ‘A handbook for policy makers: Developing coherent and system-wide induction programmes for beginning teachers’. They also focus on school leadership.
- ✓ In 2008 the European Commission conducted a public consultation on the issue of migration and education and issued a Green Paper on *Migration & Mobility: Challenges And Opportunities For EU Education Systems*⁶⁷. In November 2009 the Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting adopted *Council Conclusions on the Education of Children With a Migrant Background*⁶⁸. Follow-up work is focused around: language support, equal opportunities, tackling segregation, school level support. Next steps in this area include a study on measures for newly arrived migrant children, a policy network on education of migrant children, monitoring of the achievement gap between migrants and natives and linkages to work on early school leaving.

i. Policy Assessment

Barriers to Quality Education

Children may be prevented from accessing high quality education for several reasons. School segregation may result from systemic discrimination in the education system or gradual concentration of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Segregation of children from a migrant background or minority status is closely associated with low academic achievement and high levels of drop out. Children may be prevented from fully participating in school life due to financial reasons e.g. transport costs, costs of educational materials. Children of undocumented migrants may not be enrolled in school due as parents' fear of denunciation⁶⁹.

Failure to Address Broader Learning Outcomes for Children

Whilst there is a growing acknowledgement of the need to focus education on children's learning in its broadest sense, implementation on the ground is slow. Schools still have an over-riding focus on the static acquisition of knowledge rather than dynamic learning related to children's overall social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual development. A key challenge is to develop better assessment tools of schools performance so greater emphasis can be given to other 'soft' skills.

Children's Rights Inadequately Addressed

Schools should provide a learning environment through which students gain an understanding of the principles of democracy, respect for fundamental rights, non-violent communication, intercultural dialogue and diversity. Teachers and education professionals should be trained in children's rights, in particular to understand and respect children's right to be heard. Whilst across Europe, many countries are introducing a legal obligation to introduce school councils directly involving children in decision-making processes, this is not always carried out in a meaningful way.

Box 7: A Specific Focus on the Education of Roma Children

Commissioners Špidla and Figel' have called the inclusion of the Roma "*a litmus test for the European Union as a community of rights and values.*" Currently, Roma children have very low enrolment rates in pre-primary education and some never even enrol in school. According to World Bank data, in Central and South Eastern Europe, educational enrolment among primary-school age Roma children is on average a quarter of the corresponding rate for non-Roma children. As a result of the overall low educational achievement, the proportion of Roma youth participating in higher education is almost negligible and where they do participate, a large number of Roma youths end up dropping out of school.

Segregation in many countries occurs with Roma children being disproportionately streamed into special schools. As with in-school and residential segregation, the quality of education in special schools is inferior. Specifically for disadvantaged populations, like the Roma, addressing educational achievement should start as early as possible: high quality inclusive early childhood education is extremely important in ensuring developmental and educational school readiness, allowing for a smooth transition to regular primary school, and increasing retention thereafter.

A number of barriers exist that prevent Roma children from enrolling or continuing in school: discrimination; lack of school readiness; inability to cover school costs; the need for some children to contribute to the household income; the language of instruction differing from the language spoken in the home; lack of community awareness of the importance of education; lack of birth registration, and the general disadvantaged situation of the Roma population.

Shifting educational costs from the state to individuals⁷⁰ disproportionately negatively affects the poorest regions and most excluded populations including the Roma. While basic education is nominally free in Europe, fiscal reform measures can bring official and unofficial charges, combined with the expense of clothes, food and travel which can deter parents from sending their children to school. Even if cost and distance were not prohibitive, some Roma parents choose not to send their children to school, for fear of the general mis-treatment and discrimination they may be subject to.

A general approach of equity can help combat educational underachievement but additional, targeted measures are needed at national level to reach the groups most at risk of exclusion. The learning environment needs to be ‘child-centered, child-friendly, and empowering’⁷¹. The emphasis on quality, elimination of disparities, universal coverage, tolerance building and pre-primary school are all components that are necessary for assuring the right to education for Roma children.

ii. Monitoring Tools

Data is collected through Eurostat in several areas related to education outcomes, including early school leaving, educational attainment, life-long learning, literacy, computer and internet skills. Greater attention is due to be given to the educational outcomes for children of migrant background.

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an internationally standardised assessment of the knowledge and skills acquired by students near the end of compulsory education (aged 15). It assesses the domains of reading, mathematical and scientific literacy not merely in terms of mastery of the school curriculum, but in terms of important knowledge and skills needed in adult life.

Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe. It is a school-based survey with data collected through self-completion questionnaires administered in the classroom. The data is important in that it assesses children’s own perceptions of their health, school environment, and life satisfaction among other criteria. It is one of the few mechanisms through which a European comparative picture can be attained about children’s subjective well-being.

A number of other international and European surveys exist that provide information and data on education outcomes and children’s attitudes towards school: the European Social Survey; the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study; Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies; European Quality of Life Survey; European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs; Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

Policy Recommendations

- Every child (including Roma children and other children at risk) should have access to quality inclusive education for all children that promotes child well-being and the emotional, social and physical development of the child in addition to academic achievement.
- The role of education in preventing and breaking the poverty cycle should be strengthened by removing all financial barriers to education, ensuring equal opportunities, and by providing necessary additional support to compensate for any disadvantage in the home and community that might make it difficult for children to fully learn and develop.
- Efforts should be strengthened to ensure children complete compulsory education and to prevent early school leaving by encouraging parental support for school completion, and by providing appropriate pathways for continued education and/or vocational skills, reflecting the diversity of children's learning patterns and aspirations.

3.2.3 Health Care

Health inequalities have a significant impact on children, limiting their physical, emotional and intellectual development. Such inequalities can start from birth and persist through the life course, and may be passed on to the next generation. The provision of quality health services is important in counteracting societal inequality. Investments made during pregnancy, at birth and during the neonatal period have the greatest potential to reduce inequalities in health outcomes; prioritising the health of mothers and babies can make a key contribution to breaking the cycle of disease and poverty⁷².

Poverty and social exclusion can also expose children to forms of abuse and exploitation which can damage their health. The risks are particularly severe for vulnerable children and young people (e.g. young people in or leaving institutional care, minority children and migrant children, children living on the street).

Targeting poor households and families is probably the most direct way of improving the health of poor children⁷³. This can be done by, for example, addressing the main and underlying determinants of unfavourable health outcomes in children (such as poor nutrition or bad housing), addressing access barriers, providing care tailored to the needs of specific groups (such as the prevention and control of diseases that disproportionately affect poor children) and improving health promotion and disease prevention programmes.

Universal coverage of health insurance has a strong influence on access to health care and a key challenge is how to tackle those who may not be covered by health insurance such as recipients of social assistance and migrants⁷⁴.

Box 8: A Selection of EU Initiatives on Children's Health and Well-Being

- ✓ Commission *White Paper 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013'*⁷⁵. Sets out a new strategy whereby all Community policies must play a role in health protection. Among the objectives, measures should be taken by the Commission to promote the health of children and young people in order to help create a healthy, productive population and to support healthy ageing now and in the future.
- ✓ Council Decision establishing a second programme of Community action in the field of public health (2008-2013)⁷⁶. One of three objectives is to promote health, which involves reducing inequalities. The programme should, among other things, place emphasis on improving the health condition of children and young people and promoting a healthy lifestyle and a culture of prevention among them. As a follow up, in 2009 the European Commission launched the Youth Health Initiative⁷⁷.
- ✓ Council Resolution on the health and well-being of young people, 2008⁷⁸. Highlights the importance of promoting health and well-being of young people in Europe, and concerns regarding nutrition, physical activity, alcohol abuse, as well as sexual and mental health. Several issues related to living conditions pose a risk to young people's health and well-being. Member States and Commission invited, among other things, to mainstream the 'youth' dimension into all initiatives that are related to health; collaborate on expanding knowledge of youth health issues by increasing research and regular reporting on the topic; include data on youth health and well-being into the Commission's triennial report on young people's situation in Europe.
- ✓ Commission Communication on inequalities in health, 2009⁷⁹. Outlines a range of actions by which the Commission will support and complement Member States and other stakeholders in tackling health inequalities, including: production of headline indicators; providing funding under PROGRESS; developing health inequality audits; promoting the dissemination of good practice; making better use of EU structural funds to support activities to address factors contributing to health inequalities; developing professional training; raising awareness and promoting actions to improve health services, health promotion and preventive care for migrants and ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups; and encouraging Member States to further use the existing options under the EU rural development policy and CAP (school milk and fruit schemes). States that '*particular attention needs to be given to the needs of people in poverty, disadvantaged migrant and ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities...or children living in poverty*'.
- ✓ GRADIENT⁸⁰ is a pan-European research project, funded by the EU's Seventh Framework Programme. The Project, which runs until 2012 is exploring which actions are the most effective in tackling health inequalities among families and children, in order that political momentum can be maintained and operations strategies developed.

i. Policy Assessment

Limited Focus in Respect of Vulnerable Children's Health

EU action on public health has been largely limited to data and information collection, health promotion, awareness raising and education. In recent years, there has been increasing emphasis at

EU level on child health, focussed on children as a whole rather than children and young people at risk. Some targeted measures have been developed (in particular in relation to alcohol⁸¹, tobacco⁸², nutrition and physical activity⁸³, HIV/AIDS⁸⁴, consumer safety⁸⁵, and food⁸⁶), however the overall focus has been relatively narrow. The majority of measures are non-binding, given the restricted EU competence.

Limited Focus on Children's Access to Health

According to the Commission Communication on health inequalities⁸⁷, there is generally a lack of awareness and insufficient policy priority and commitment by Member States and other stakeholders on tackling health inequalities. There is a lack of comparable and regular data (e.g. by age, gender, socio-economic status), and insufficient knowledge on the determinants and the effective policies to implement. These points are all relevant to the position of children, and particularly those facing poverty and social exclusion. Although the Communication recognises the importance of health inequalities for children, the focus on children within the Communication – and the proposed actions – is limited.

Children's Mental Health Requires More Attention

There is a recognised specific gap in relation to mental health. In 2008, the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being 12-13 June 2008 (Brussels)⁸⁸ called for action in five priority areas, of which one was mental health in youth and education. A subsequent Commission/DG for Health and Consumers Consensus Paper on 'Mental health in youth and education'⁸⁹ (2008) highlights that an estimated 10 to 20% of children and adolescents suffer from mental health problems⁹⁰. It also identifies that early exposure to risk factors (e.g. smoking or alcohol consumption during pregnancy or other poor health behaviours, poor parenting styles, parental conflict, child maltreatment, child abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence), and poverty and inequality in youth (e.g. living in a household on low incomes, living in rented accommodation, growing up in a disadvantaged neighbourhood) can increase mental health problems and lead to poorer outcomes in later life.

Higher prevalence of mental health problems is found among socially deprived groups, including migrant populations – all of which document the link between health and an approach to child well-being. Although high-quality sources of national data exist there is to date no set of indicators to compare children's mental health across EU Member States.

ii. Monitoring Tools

A first set of European Community Health Indicators was produced by the ECHI project, and work is continuing through a range of Working Parties and Task Forces. Of the 40+ priority indicators, very few specifically address children and young people, and the indicators which are included are not new published data but a compilation of what was already available from other public sources⁹¹. Nevertheless, a range of indicators are available at EU level to track child health, including:

- life expectancy at birth (commonly agreed EU indicator)
- infant mortality (World Development Indicators)
- child mortality (WHO)
- low birth weight, breastfeeding, immunisation (OECD)
- health behaviour and self-defined health (Health Behaviour of School Age Children)
- suicide rates (OECD).

However coverage is not always comprehensive; only 19 EU Member States are OECD members, for instance⁸². There is little internationally comparable data on outcomes for certain groups of vulnerable children (e.g. migrants).

Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe. It is a school-based survey with data collected through self-completion questionnaires administered in the classroom. The data is important in that it assesses children's own perceptions of their health, school environment, and life satisfaction among other criteria. It is one of the few mechanisms through which a European comparative picture can be attained about children's subjective well-being. The WHO Regional Office for Europe also maintains a European Health for All Database covering some 600 indicators, which include child and adolescent health⁹³.

Within the framework of the National Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, there is some consideration of health issues, however very little of the reporting has so far focussed on children.

Policy Recommendations

- Children should be specifically targeted within broader efforts to reduce health inequalities and to achieve universal access to health care for poor and socially excluded groups, including by ensuring universal coverage of health insurance.
- Recognising that childhood is a crucial period for children's physical, mental and emotional development, all children should be assured access to health promotion and prevention programmes.
- Recognising the higher prevalence of mental health problems among socially deprived groups and the growing number of children who suffer from mental health problems, mental health services should be expanded and made available to more children requiring support.

3.2.4 Environment/Housing

Children are more vulnerable than adults to a range of environmental threats, including pollution, heavy traffic, food additives, and land contamination. Their bodies are still developing, they may be less aware of the hazards they face, and they have less control over their environment than adults. All children suffer from the consequences of polluted and unsafe environments but children belonging to the most disadvantaged population groups are at the highest risk. Underdevelopment and poverty are strongly related to the burden of environmentally attributable disease, and this is even more true for children⁹⁴.

Poor families have little or no choice over where they live, and are more likely to live in unhealthy and/or unsafe environments (e.g. poor housing, overcrowding, and lack of play space) and yet the importance of children being brought up in decent housing with good basic services and in a safe environment is widely recognised as being essential for their long-term development⁹⁵.

Children in homeless families are not often found living on the streets, but rather in forms of temporary shelter, and therefore tend to be in situations of ‘houselessness’, insecure housing or inadequate housing. This includes: children in families living in temporary shelters, children with their mothers living in refuges for survivors of domestic violence, children in families threatened with eviction, and children in families living in very poor housing⁹⁶.

Box 9: A Selection of EU Initiatives on Housing and the Environment Related to Child Poverty And Well-Being

- ✓ *Commission Communication ‘A European Environment and Health Strategy’, 11 June 2003, COM (2003) 338 final.* Objectives: to reduce the disease burden caused by environmental factors in the EU; to identify and to prevent new health threats caused by environmental factors; to strengthen EU capacity for policymaking in this area. Section 5.3 highlights importance of a focus on children owing to their particular vulnerability. First cycle (2004-2010) aims to establish good understanding of the links between environmental factors and (among others): childhood respiratory diseases, asthma and allergies, and childhood cancer. In particular aims to establish a harmonised EU Bio-monitoring framework in relation to children.
- ✓ *Commission Communication ‘The European Environment and Health Action Plan’ 2004-2010.* Seeks to develop integrated environment and health information, strengthen research on environment and health, and review policies and improve communication. *‘The concerns of children are integrated throughout the Action Plan. A number of major child health issues will be covered in the monitoring, as will exposure to the environmental stressors to which children are particularly sensitive. Research on susceptibility is particularly important, so that policy responses can be adjusted to the needs of children in those cases where they are particularly vulnerable.’*
- ✓ *Council Decision establishing a second programme of Community action in the field of public health (2008-2013)⁹⁷.* (see ‘child health’ above) With regard to environmental issues, special action should focus on children and other groups that are particularly vulnerable to hazardous environmental conditions. The programme should complement the actions taken within the European Environment and Health Action Plan 2004-2010.
- ✓ *Children’s Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe.* CEHAPE is an initiative led by the World Health Organization Regional Office (WHO) for Europe. It was adopted by European Ministers in 2004 at the Fourth Conference on Environment and Health and signed by all 53 member states of the WHO European Region. The main commitments focus on four regional priority goals (RPGs): 1/ ensure safe water and adequate sanitation 2/ ensure protection from injuries and adequate physical activity 3/ ensure clean outdoor and indoor air 4/ aim at chemical-free environments. The CEHAPE Action Plan provides detailed guidance to national, as well as local, health and environment authorities in developing children’s health and environment action plans (CEHAPs), according to their priorities and needs. The actions are grouped into six categories (legislative, educational/health promotion, participation of stakeholders, knowledge building, monitoring, and service delivery or infrastructure). The effectiveness of the child-specific actions was evaluated for the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Parma, Italy, 10-12 March 2010).

- ✓ *Joint Report of the Commission and Council on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009. Stated that ‘sustained work is required to tackle homelessness as an extremely serious form of exclusion.’*
- ✓ *Homelessness and housing exclusion was a thematic priority of the OMC on social protection and social inclusion in 2009 and is analysed in the Joint Report of the Commission and Council in Spring 2010.*

i. Policy Assessment

Initiatives on Housing/Environmental Issues Lack a Focus On Children

In relation to homelessness and housing exclusion, a report for the Commission (published in December 2009)⁹⁸ summarises main findings from analysis by the Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion. In terms of the main obstacles to the development of policy at EU and Member State levels, the summary report highlighted insufficient political commitment, lack of understanding of the issues and lack of agreement on definitions and appropriate indicators, absence of or inadequate data sources, and inadequate (if any) monitoring and reporting. Although the general issues raised are also relevant to children, there is no specific attention to child homelessness in the report.

To inform the development of future policy, a ‘European Consensus Conference on Homelessness’ is taking place in Brussels on 9/10 December 2010, organised by the Belgian Presidency of the EU, together with the European Commission (DG EMPL), FEANTSA (the European Federation of Organisations Working with the Homeless) and the French Government. The Conference seeks to establish common understandings between all the key stakeholders, drawing on an extensive preparatory phase involving NGOs, researchers, public authorities, people with direct experience of homelessness and representatives of related sectors.

Whilst EU policy statements recognise the importance of focussing on the impact of environmental factors on child health, the extent to which these have been implemented is unclear. Moreover, there appears to be limited emphasis on poverty and social exclusion as risk factors.

ii. Monitoring Tools

A European Environment and Health Information System (EHIS) has been developed by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and a wide group of WHO Member States since 2004. The work on EHIS has been conducted through a series of projects supported by grants from the DG Health and Consumer Protection. The EHIS projects have focused on the health issues identified as priorities for pan-European action under CEHAPE and particularly on its four regional priority goals. Twenty six indicators cover health issues related to the environment, environmental issues affecting children’s health, and action aiming at reducing or preventing the health risks. For the majority of the indicators data are currently available from 13 to 29 countries; for a few, data covered almost all the countries in the WHO European Region. A baseline assessment was compiled in 2007⁹⁹, providing an evaluation of the status and trends in the first half of the current decade of the priority RPG issues, and this will be extended over time. An updated report and information system was released for the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in March 2010¹⁰⁰.

There are some data on children experiencing homelessness in various countries, however this is fragmented and sometimes difficult to interpret. Official data is collected in different ways and responsibilities are sometimes divided between various ministries, service providers or national statistics institutes. No definition of homelessness has yet been agreed at European level. One proposed definition is ETHOS – European Typology on Homelessness and housing exclusion – a typology developed by the data collection working group of FEANTSA and researchers of the European Observatory on Homelessness¹⁰¹.

The European Quality of Life Survey¹⁰² produced by the European Foundation on Living and Working Conditions also contains some relevant information and indicators on environment and housing issues (e.g. on overcrowding, quality of the local environment, housing problems). However information is derived from respondents aged 18+, therefore excluding children's own perspectives of their circumstances.

Policy Recommendations

- Consideration of children's best interest should be integrated into city and territorial planning. Particular attention should be given to healthy and safe environments for children in the home and in their neighbourhood that respect children's right to play and study.
- Ensure affordable and quality housing for families with children which provide long-term solutions and avoid unnecessary moves and school changes.

3.2.5 Child Protection and Social Services

Poverty and social exclusion expose children to abuse and exploitation, while children exposed to violence, abuse and exploitation are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Poverty and stress – along with drug and alcohol abuse – appear to be the factors most closely and consistently associated with child abuse and neglect. Children in extreme circumstances – e.g. street children, migrants – who are often fleeing from abuse and exploitation or caught in it – are likely to be on their own and at serious risk, and may experience a range of interlinked difficulties that put them at serious risk of poverty in the short- and long-term. Children exposed to violence and abuse or subject to exploitation are less likely to learn or learn well, with long-term consequences for their opportunity to escape poverty.

Increased pressures on parents' working time, through extended hours, multiple jobs, reduces the time available for nurture and care of children; in more severe cases, emotional well-being can be seriously undermined¹⁰³. There is some evidence that domestic violence rates have risen during the recession, linking economic shocks to escalating domestic violence¹⁰⁴.

Although most Member States exclude poverty and material deprivation as a reason for placement of a child outside their biological family, it is clearly an underlying cause in many countries. Residential care settings are now widely recognized as being the solution of last resort. However, in many countries the number of children in institutions is stable or even increasing, due to inadequate resourcing and planning of family-based care alternatives. Certain groups of children (e.g. the Roma) are heavily over-represented among the children in institutional care. They may be misdiagnosed as having a disability and referred for misguided 'care' reasons.

Children who leave public care are particularly exposed to poverty and social exclusion, often lacking family or social support, and are over-represented in homelessness figures where these are available¹⁰⁵. One important theme that has emerged in the Social OMC has been the need to move away from institutionalised provision for children and to put more focus on families and on care in the community.

Effective child protection systems and social services are essential to ensure high levels of protection for children who are vulnerable and marginalised as a result of discrimination, maltreatment, neglect, sexual abuse, drugs and alcohol, mental health problems or other separation from their families – living in care, on the streets or as unaccompanied children. Such services provide a continuum of care – from prevention, to response to violations, to promoting awareness raising and training among children, parents and communities.

Early intervention and prevention services that work across public agencies and service providers (health, schools, police, psychosocial support) can be very effective in ensuring that children with potential problems are identified early and get the full range of support they need. Where prevention has not been possible, child protection systems provide response services - managing fostering and adoption services, residential day care, sheltered accommodation and associated support services for vulnerable children and parents, including victims of abuse and children whose parents have an alcohol problem.

A critical challenge in developing effective responses to child poverty and social exclusion (in particular the more extreme situations) is to improve the quality and standards of social services, to improve local coordination and to increase their capacity for early intervention¹⁰⁶.

Box 10: A Selection Of EU Initiatives on Child Protection of Relevance to Child Poverty and Child Well-Being

- ✓ *Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA of 19 July 2002 on combating trafficking in human beings* seeks to develop a comprehensive EU approach to trafficking by establishing uniform definitions and common standards of sanctions, liability and jurisdiction (under revision in 2010).
- ✓ *Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA of 22 December 2003 on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography* seeks to harmonize state laws (under revision in 2010).
- ✓ *The Swedish Presidency proposal for a multi-annual programme in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice, (the “Stockholm Programme”)* states that children’s rights must be “systematically and strategically taken into account”. “Children in particularly vulnerable situations should receive special attention, notably in the context of immigration policy (unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking etc) and sexual exploitation and abuse”.
- ✓ *The Daphne Programme* was established in 1997 to support NGOs in tackling violence against children, young people and women. It has supported a wide range of projects in relation to: family violence, sexual violence, trafficking in human beings, commercial sexual exploitation, violence in schools, and abuse of Internet and pornographic images of children.

Limited Attention to Prevention Measures In Respect Of Child Protection

The EU has addressed some child protection issues, however the EU's legislative measures are approached from the perspective of the underlying treaty basis (i.e. immigration control, cross-border or criminal matters) and have to date been more focused on the criminal or immigration dimensions than the protection and prevention dimensions¹⁰⁷. This is changing with a new round of legislation on a number of child protection issues that put a greater emphasis on victim protection but still lack a solid legal basis or response on reinforcing prevention or addressing the key principles and practices necessary for strong child protection and care systems.

The current updates of the Framework Decisions on sexual exploitation and trafficking remain focused on criminal dimensions, driven by the legal basis, though with an increased attention to protection of victims, particular in connection with criminal proceedings. Consequently, the draft Directives make only limited progress in prompting Member States to adopt measures related to the preventive dimension of the issue that is needed to reduce the kinds of exploitation and abuse cycles linked to on-going, inter-generational poverty¹⁰⁸.

Nonetheless, on the horizon, the recent Commission Communication on an Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors¹⁰⁹ expressed the Commission's intention to introduce either targeted amendments or a specific instrument that would set down common standards for unaccompanied children across the EU. Providing harmonised protection standards for this group of especially marginalised children has the potential of providing stronger protection for all marginalised children if prepared with a view to addressing other marginalised children.

In contrast, the Council of Europe has been active for a number of years in efforts to eradicate violence against children. This has included legally binding instruments (e.g. the ECHR, the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, the Convention on Trafficking), judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, activities carried out by the Commissioner for Human Rights, and awareness-raising campaigns ('Building a Europe with and for Children')¹¹⁰.

ii. Monitoring Tools

There are a number of problems with the available research and statistics that hinder the construction of any accurate national or European assessment of child protection. For example, in-depth research (and even official statistics) covering all forms of violence experienced by children is available for very few countries. Data are also not readily comparable across countries because of differences between official data collection and research studies in definitions of key terms, what is considered lawful or unlawful, methods of data collection, and the relative emphases given to criminal or social welfare responses¹¹¹.

Official statistics concerning child protection registers, violent crime, rates of prosecution and conviction invariably represent only the tip of the iceberg of the problem of violence against children. In addition, studies usually focus on specific forms of violence in isolation, with little consideration of the associations between these forms of violence or the fact that children frequently experience multiple forms of violence during their lives. There are also relatively few studies where children themselves have been asked about their experiences and views relating to violence and abuse and the link to social exclusion.

Despite these difficulties, various attempts have been made to establish indicators on different dimensions of violence against children. For example, at international level, a Manual for the Meas-

urement of Indicators of Violence against Children was developed to accompany the UN Study on Violence against Children. At EU level, a report for the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)¹¹² has sought to devise indicators in relation to violence against children and exploitation (both sexual including child prostitution, “sex tourism”, child abuse images/pornography, and economic). Another recent study for the FRA¹¹³ concluded that it is impossible to make even remotely accurate statements concerning the actual prevalence of child trafficking.

The UNICEF Transmonee Database, covering several EU Member States (as well as additional Accession and Pre-Accession States and Eastern Neighbourhood States) - Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia draws data from national statistical offices and covers a number of dimensions of child protection – as well as other topics including education and health¹¹⁴.

Policy Recommendations

- Child protection and social services should be strengthened to provide early intervention and prevention services that support and empower families most at-risk and avoid escalation of problems that may push children further into poverty and risky situations.
- Ensure that children are not removed from their families due to families’ lack of resources to care for children. Instead families must be supported to care for their children themselves, provided this is in the best interest of the child and efforts should be made to facilitate the deinstitutionalisation of children.
- Promote the inclusion in society of all children who are not living in families (street children, those living in institutional care, unaccompanied minors, those living in temporary accommodation, etc.) by ensuring they are given appropriate quality support and care and have access to mainstream services including education, health, etc.

3.3 Active Participation of Children and Young People

3.3.1 Children’s Right to Be Heard

A child rights perspective recognises that children are both family members and social actors in their own right. Article 12 of the UNCRC highlights the role of the child as an active participant in the promotion, protection and monitoring of his or her rights, and applies equally to all measures adopted by States to implement the Convention.

Although it does not give children full control over decisions that affect them or trump the rights of parents, Article 12 represents a significant challenge to traditional perspectives on children and childhood. It gives children the right to be heard in all matters affecting them, whether in the family, at school, or in the wider community. Importantly, public policy and legislation are not excluded. It acknowledges the importance of children having their views not just listened to, but also taken seriously¹¹⁵. And drawing also on the concept of ‘evolving capacities’ (Article 5, CRC), it recognises the relevance of children’s age and maturity, and their understanding of decisions they face¹¹⁶.

It is particularly important to enable children who face poverty and social exclusion to influence the

decisions that affect them. Although there are obstacles to participation for all children, these are multiplied for children who are disadvantaged (and especially for those in the younger age groups). They often feel stigmatised and discriminated against, and it is likely that traditional approaches to consultation will fail to engage with them. Nevertheless children from marginalized groups (e.g. migrants, Roma children, street children, disabled children) have important views and experiences to contribute.

As the 2008 European Council resolution on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities (2008) argues, *‘empowering every young person to fulfil his or her potential and to participate actively in community life is essential for the sound and sustainable development of societies and contributes to overall social cohesion by building mutually trusting relationships with other groups of society...’*.

Box 11: A Selection of EU Initiatives on Children’s Right to be Heard

- ✓ The 2006 Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child” (COM2006 367) recognised the need to improve cooperation with stakeholders, including children. It committed the EU to *“involving children in the decision-making process”*. Subsequently the EC has commissioned *Eurobarometer Opinion Surveys on ‘The Rights of the Child’ (2008 and 2009)*¹¹⁷. These surveys were conducted to determine how much young people (15-18 years old) knew about the Rights of the Child, the extent to which these rights were protected and which actions should be taken as a priority to improve them at national and European levels. A number of focus groups are currently under way with children aged 15-18.
- ✓ The European Commission’s *Action Plan on Children’s Rights in External Action* (2008) argues that implementing child participation means that the EU should:
 - promote opportunities for children to acquire sufficient and adequate competencies and to strengthen their leadership and negotiation skills;
 - support networking between existing children’s organisations;
 - and enhance the capacity of authorities and planners to set up structures allowing for effective children’s participation.
- ✓ The *White Paper on Youth* launched in 2001 was based on a one and half-year long process involving young people, experts in the youth-field, national authorities and NGOs in the member States and beyond. The European Youth Pact adopted by the European Council in 2005 emphasises the participation of young people. The EU engages in a formal structured dialogue with young people which is coordinated by a European Steering Committee composed of representatives of the Trio Presidency countries’ Ministries for Youth Affairs, National Youth Councils and National Agencies of the Youth in Action programme, as well as representatives of the European Commission and the European Youth Forum (renewed every 18 months). At the level of Member States, National Working Groups are set up to secure the participatory process. These groups will be composed, inter alia, of representatives of Ministries for Youth Affairs, National Youth Councils, local and regional youth councils, youth organisations, those active in youth work, diverse young people and youth researchers¹¹⁸.

i. Policy Assessment

Limited Understanding of Meaningful Participation

Whilst children's right to be heard in decision-making processes is gaining ground in family settings, there is still a long way to go for this principle to be applied widely in schools, in communities, within public authorities, legislatures and by professionals working with and for children. Many good practices exist whereby children's participation has improved quality of services and influenced local, regional and national policy making, but they remain more or less isolated examples rather than mainstream practice.

Initiatives on Participation are Under-Resourced

Meaningful participation of children in decision-making outside the family setting requires investment of human and financial resources. It can also extend the time necessary to arrive at decisions. Even in countries where the value of participation is widely acknowledged, participation work is the first to suffer from budget cuts in times of economic strain.

ii. Monitoring Tools

There are very few examples of where information is systematically collected on levels of children's participation in different settings.

The Observatory for Childhood, Youth and Youth Care, in French-speaking Belgium conducted a survey of around 1,000 children aged 10-18 about their own experience of participation in different contexts: family, school, youth organisations, interaction with adults, community. It concluded that whereas most children are heard and listened to in their family, only a small fraction of them have some opportunity to be active participants in the school context. A strong minority of children stay away from any kind of social affiliation outside family or school and have no experience at all of any kind of concrete experience of a democratic process. Only a minority of children is well informed about the content of the CRC¹¹⁹.

UNICEF has developed a set of indicators on meaningful child participation that measure: legal entitlements to participate, the right of access to information for children, awareness-raising on children's civil rights, opportunities to influence public decisions, and respect for children's participation in their everyday lives¹²⁰.

Policy Recommendations

- Governments should adopt necessary laws and policies that recognize the child's right to be heard and participate in all decisions that affect them, and provide specific opportunities for participation in policy making.
- Ensure policies addressed at tackling child poverty and social exclusion reflect the views and suggestions of children themselves, including those most marginalized.
- Ensure all those working with and for children understand the impact of poverty and social exclusion and the need to listen and to take account of the views of children.

3.3.2 Participation of Children in Social, Recreational, Cultural, Sporting and Civic Activities

Frazer and Marlier highlight the importance of access to social, recreational, sporting and cultural activities for the well-being and personal development of children and active inclusion in society. Participation in sport and recreational activities creates opportunities for participation in social life, for personal development and promotes better health. Participation in cultural activities contributes to building skills and self-confidence, enhancing self-esteem and identity, promoting respect for cultural diversity and thus countering discrimination. Policies which increase the access of young people at high risk of poverty and social exclusion to such activities are therefore important¹²¹.

Box 12: A Selection of EU Initiatives on Children's Participation in Social, Cultural, Recreational and Civil Activities

- ✓ EU Youth Policy places increasing attention on youth participation. Typically these target young people aged 15 and over – overlapping with children as defined by the UNCRC (up to 18).
 - *Council Resolution on common objectives for participation by young people (2003)*¹²². EU Member States are committed to increasing the participation by young people in the civic life of their community and in the system of representative democracy and 'greater support for various forms of learning to participate'.
 - *Commission Communication on 'European policies concerning youth (2005)*¹²³. 'The emphasis should continue to be placed on increasing participation at the local level, within representative democracy, and providing greater support for learning to participate'.
 - 'Youth Pact for Europe', adopted by the European Council in 2005. Aims to improve education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans. One of the objectives of the subsequent 'Youth in Action' Programme (2007-2013)¹²⁴ is promoting young people's active citizenship.
 - *Commission Communication 'Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society' (2007)*¹²⁵. Although this communication focuses on young people aged 15 years and older, several parts are relevant for children (15-18 years old). The Communication is concerned about the high level of child poverty in the EU, among other things. 'Child well-being has been seen to have important effects on subsequent education and employment... Breaking the inter-generational transmission of poverty is the key challenge'.
 - *Council resolution on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities (2008)*¹²⁶. Invites the Member States, when implementing the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and the European Youth Pact, to give high priority to young people in the most vulnerable situations (e.g. from less-privileged educational, socio-economic or geographical backgrounds, or disabilities). In parallel, a peer learning exercise was carried out to facilitate the sharing of best practice in the field of participation for all young people, and the results compiled in a 'Good Practice Brochure'¹²⁷.
 - *An EU Strategy for Youth 2010-2018 – Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities (2009)*¹²⁸. Acknowledges that young people are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, especially in the current economic and financial crisis. Aims to 'create more opportunities for youth in education and employment', 'improve access and full participation of all young people in society', and 'foster solidarity between youth and society'.

i. Policy Assessment

Participation of Younger Children Is Not Addressed

The main focus of participation activities at EU level is young people aged 15 and above. Although some activities include children from aged 13, there is little or no recognition in EU policy documents of how young children are involved in decision making.

Many Young People Are Still Marginalized

Despite continuing efforts to prioritise the participation and inclusion of young people 'with fewer opportunities', the engagement of marginalized young people is still limited.

ii. Monitoring Tools

In line with the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018), the Commission has set up a working group to identify existing indicators in the areas of education, employment, social inclusion and health and to explore possible new indicators in policy areas where they do not yet exist, including youth participation. The work to date suggests that this will monitor participation of young people in associations, sport and leisure groups, and civic activities. These actions are also relevant to the development of child participation in EU internal policy and practice. The UN is in the process of developing a set of indicators on youth participation.

Policy Recommendations

- Recognising the importance of culture, youth work and sports activities in the inclusion and well-being of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, specific targeted actions should be supported to reach out to these groups.
- Schools should promote more after- and outside school activities that enable all children to access cultural, recreational, sporting activities that build self-esteem, reduce frustration and support overall learning and well-being.



4. The Way Forward

4.1 Governance and Implementation

Recommendations (based on Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise 2010)

Building on the new Lisbon Treaty objectives on social inclusion and children's rights:

- Create a **clear political priority** on addressing child poverty and well-being:
 - A 2010 European Council Conclusion includes a strong commitment to tackling poverty and social exclusion in general and child poverty and social exclusion in particular as a key component of the EU 2020 agenda;
 - A renewed and strengthened Social OMC is formally agreed upon at EU level, together with an enhanced reporting mechanism for Member States to ensure political engagement and commitment to the EU's common social objectives. Child poverty and social exclusion should be one of the cornerstones on which all Member States' are required to report;
 - Clear, quantified objectives are agreed upon at EU level for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion in general and child poverty in particular e.g. the EU should commit to reducing overall at-risk-of poverty rates of children by 50% by 2020 with accompanying targets for all EU Member States;
 - Child poverty and well-being is given prominence in the EU2020 Platform Against Poverty
 - A political commitment is made at EU level to an annual report to the Spring European Council and to the European Parliament on progress towards the agreed quantified objectives (as part of the annual *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*); and
 - A Commission Staff Working Document on Child Poverty and Well-Being is adopted, followed by an EU Recommendation which is presented to the European Council and the Parliament.
- Run a **multi-annual work programme** within the Social OMC focusing specifically on child poverty and well-being. This would include:
 - A series of declarations/communications/high profile events on specific issues (e.g. early years, deinstitutionalisation, Roma children, discrimination, consultation/ participation of children).
 - Action to deepen child inclusion mainstreaming across EU policies (see 3 below);
 - A work programme on indicators, data collection and further policy analysis;
 - A programme of enhanced mutual learning (including peer reviews) and awareness raising;
 - Action to ensure child poverty objectives are integrated into the development, implementation and monitoring of the Operational Programmes within the Structural Funds.

- Ensure **children's well-being is mainstreamed** across all EU policy making
 - Arrangements are put in place that require all EU policies to be systematically “child proofed” for their potential impact on child poverty and social exclusion, for example through social impact assessments, in all the relevant policy domains especially focusing on immigration, discrimination, gender equality, active inclusion, flexible working, housing, health and education and the EU’s sustainable development agenda;
 - Clearer institutional links are created between the EU’s Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the work on the social inclusion of children so that they are mutually reinforcing;
 - The arrangements for implementing the EU2020 agenda guarantee closer and more effective links between social, employment and growth policies, and especially between the renewed Social OMC and the future arrangements to promote growth and jobs.
- Ensure **effective benchmarking, monitoring and reporting on Member State performance** to support tailored responses to policy challenges
 - An enhanced system for regular monitoring and reporting on child poverty and child well-being should be established within the Social OMC by implementing the recommendations of the EU Task-Force report on child poverty and well-being and the TARKI/Applica study on child well-being indicators (see Annex 2). These could be further developed on an on-going basis to improve the timeliness, coverage and relevance of related data (which should then also cover children who are not living in private households, such as those in institutions). The impact of the crisis on children should also be monitored more closely.
 - An annual scoreboard on child well-being should be published including available indicators across the range of outcomes for children, for example in the policy areas outlined above: income poverty, family policies, early years, education, health, housing and environment, child protection and social services.
 - More use can be made of ‘*contextualised benchmarking*’¹²⁹. Assessment of Member States’ performance across a range of outcomes for children and analysis of their particular social and economic context, can allow more tailored policy recommendations and progress targets, which should be agreed between the European Commission and national governments.
- Strengthen **learning and analysis** at EU level
 - More focussed work is required around specific issues (e.g. deinstitutionalisation, migrant children, effect of the crisis on children, homeless children).
 - A further programme of in-depth policy orientated research into:
 - intergenerational aspects of child poverty;
 - multidimensionality;
 - children in “extreme” situations;
 - links between socio-economic/political systems and impact on child poverty.
- Enhance the **role of stakeholders in the process**
 - Put the involvement of children at the heart of the process and then build this as a theme into the proposed work programme;
 - Deepen the involvement of other actors defending children’s needs, such as NGOs and local social services in the policy-making process.

4.2 Roadmap of Actions

Date	Document / Event	Objective
June 2010	EU 2020 Strategy to be adopted	Reference to a specific target on child poverty
Sept 2010	Belgian Presidency Conference on Child Poverty and Well Being	Launch a debate on the EU Recommendation on Child Poverty & Well-Being
Autumn 2010	<p>Belgian Presidency events on related issues:</p> <p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8th: Expert conference « L'Europe de l'Enfance », in Antwerp (Flemish government -Culture, youth, sport and media) • 13th: Open Method of Coordination in Brussels (FPS Social Security) • 24th: Ensuring an adequate minimum income for all (EAPN-BAPN, Belgian Ministry) • 28th: Education and social inclusion (Flemish government) <p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3rd: European Youth Conference (Flemish government in collaboration with the French community) • 14th: Social inclusion of families (Cabinet Wathélet) <p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16th: Ministerial meeting « Europe de l'Enfance » (French community) • 8th: Mobility of young people with less opportunities (French community) 	Integrate a discussion and consideration of child poverty & well-being dimensions
November 2010	European Commission Staff Working Document on Child Poverty and Well-Being	Shapes the discussion and consultation leading to a Commission/Council Recommendation on Child Poverty & Well-Being
Spring 2011	Adoption of a Commission/Council Recommendation on Child Poverty & Well-Being	Setting out binding targets for the reduction of child poverty, a multi-dimensional approach to child poverty and well-being, supported by a robust process
Spring 2011	European Commission Roadmap on implementing the Recommendation	Setting out the Recommendation objectives at EU and country level, and a series of actions to reach the objectives set out in the Recommendation, with appropriate milestones.



Annexes

Annex 1: Summary of Policy Recommendations

1. Access to Adequate Resources

1.1. Income and Benefits

- Countries which spend most on social benefits (excluding pensions) tend to have lowest child poverty levels. Government should improve child benefits as an expression of intergenerational solidarity, recognition of the inherent value of childhood and an investment in Europe's future.
- Universal child benefits are the most effective way of providing income support to families with children. They should be received automatically and coupled with targeted benefits for those most in need.
- Child sensitive income support also includes benefits targeted directly at children such as government provided child-trust funds, free books and education materials, free school meals, free access to leisure and cultural activities etc.

1.2. Reconciliation of Work and Family Life

- Quality work for parents is crucial. Flexible working arrangements should be provided to enable parents to balance work and family commitments. Work arrangements should accommodate increasingly diverse household compositions.
- Leave arrangements for parents should be paid, universally accessible and offer flexibility to allow parents to respond best to their children's needs over the course of their childhood. Leave arrangements should respect and support increasingly diverse household compositions.
- Parents should have access to affordable, accessible and high quality services to support them and their children. Services should accommodate the increasingly diverse work patterns of parents.

2. Access to Services and Opportunities

2.1 Early Childhood

- Early childhood should be recognized as a crucial stage in children's education, development and social integration, requiring public investment in services that are accessible to all, regardless of parent's labour market situation.
- Clear quality criteria should be set for early childhood services including professional qualifications, recognition, training, staff/child ratio, educational philosophy and values.

2.2 Education

- Every child (including Roma children and other children at risk) should have access to quality inclusive education for all children that promotes child well-being and the emotional, social and physical development of the child in addition to academic achievement.
- The role of education in preventing and breaking the poverty cycle should be strengthened by removing all financial barriers to education, ensuring equal opportunities, and by providing necessary additional support to compensate for any disadvantage in the home and community that might make it difficult for children to fully learn and develop.
- Efforts should be strengthened to ensure children complete compulsory education and to prevent early school leaving by encouraging parental support for school completion, and by providing appropriate pathways for continued education and/or vocational skills, reflecting the diversity of children's learning patterns and aspirations.

2.3 Health Care

- Children should be specifically targeted within broader efforts to reduce health inequalities and to achieve universal access to health care for poor and socially excluded groups, including by ensuring universal coverage of health insurance.
- Recognising that childhood is a crucial period for children's physical, mental and emotional development, all children should be assured access to health promotion and prevention programmes.
- Recognising the higher prevalence of mental health problems among socially deprived groups and the growing number of children who suffer from mental health problems, mental health services should be expanded and made available to more children requiring support.

2.4 Housing and Environment

- Consideration of children's best interest should be integrated into city and territorial planning. Particular attention should be given to healthy and safe environments for children in the home and in their neighbourhood that respect children's right to play and study.
- Ensure affordable and quality housing for families with children which provide long-term solutions and avoid unnecessary moves and school changes.

2.5 Child Protection and Social Services

- Child protection and social services should be strengthened to provide early intervention and prevention services that support and empower families most at-risk and avoid escalation of problems that may push children further into poverty and risky situations.

- Ensure that children are not removed from their families due to families' lack of resources to care for children. Instead families must be supported to care for their children themselves, provided this is in the best interest of the child and efforts should be made to facilitate the de-institutionalisation of children.
- Promote the inclusion in society of all children who are not living in families (street children, those living in institutional care, unaccompanied minors, those living in temporary accommodation) by ensuring they are given appropriate quality support and care and have access to mainstream services including education, health, etc.

3. Children's Participation

3.1 Children's Right to be Heard

- Governments should adopt necessary laws and policies that recognize the child's right to be heard and participate in all decisions that affect them, and provide specific opportunities for participation in policy making.
- Ensure policies addressed at tackling child poverty and social exclusion reflect the views and suggestions of children themselves, including those most marginalized.
- Ensure all those working with and for children understand the impact of poverty and social exclusion and the need to listen and to take account of the views of children.

3.2 Participation of children in social, recreational, cultural, sporting and civic activities

- Recognising the importance of culture, youth work and sports activities in the inclusion and well-being of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, specific targeted actions should be supported to reach out to these groups.
- Schools should promote more and better quality after- and outside school activities that give *all* children to access cultural, recreational, sporting activities that build self-esteem, reduce frustration and support overall learning and well-being.

Annex 2: Existing Recommendations on Child Well-Being Indicators for the EU

In 2009, TÁRKI Social Research Institute (Budapest, Hungary) and Applica (Brussels, Belgium) completed a study on “Child Poverty and Child Well-being in the European Union” for DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Unit E.2

Task 3 of the project aimed “to formulate recommendations for a limited set of indicators and break-downs that are most relevant from a child perspective and that best reflect the multidimensional nature of child poverty and well-being in the European Union. These are intended to be in line with:

- The monitoring framework set up in the context of the OMC on social protection and social inclusion.
- The recommendations formulated by the EU Task-Force and the work that has already been carried out during the implementation of the Social OMC.
- The existing practices of Member States in this area.
- Existing initiatives to capture the main aspects of child well-being (OECD, UNICEF, etc.).
- The results of empirical analysis.”

The following table provides an overview of their suggested child-related indicators portfolio

Table 1: Indicators of child poverty and well-being by dimension and age group

Dimension	Child age group		
	0–5 (0–2, 3–5)	6–11	12–17
A1: Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty rate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative median poverty risk gap • Persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate • Dispersion around the poverty threshold 		
A2: Material deprivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary indicator • Education indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary indicator • Education indicator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary indicator 		
A3: Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing costs • Overcrowding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing costs • Overcrowding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing costs • Overcrowding
A4: Labour-market attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in low work-intensity (including jobless) households • Childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in low work-intensity (including jobless) households • Childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in low work-intensity (including jobless) households • Childcare
B1: Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in pre-primary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Low) Reading literacy performance of pupils aged 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Low) Reading literacy performance of pupils aged 10 • Early school-leavers (when 18–24)
B2: Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant mortality (by SES) • Perinatal mortality • Vaccination • Low birth weight • Breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overweight • Fruit daily • Breakfast every school day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-perceived general health • Physical activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life expectancy at birth (by SES) 		
B3: Exposure to risk and risk behaviour			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teenage births • Smoking • Alcohol consumption • Drug consumption
B4: Social participation and relationships, family environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share in single-parent households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share in single-parent households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share in single-parent households
B5: Local environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime in the area is a problem • Pollution or dirt is a problem in the area 		

Note: **Bolded** indicators are suggested as extensions to the current inclusion portfolio.



References

- 1 The highest rates were recorded in Romania (33%), Bulgaria (26%), Italy and Latvia (both 25%), and the lowest in Denmark (9%), Slovenia and Finland (both 12%).
- 2 Eurostat, 18 Jan 2010. News release 'Living Conditions in 2008', STAT 10/10.
- 3 European Commission COM (2010) 2020: Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
- 4 'Poverty' is generally understood to mean income poverty, and is based on data collected at the household level; this is the current EU approach which defines at risk-of-poverty' (i.e. the numbers of children living in low income families). While important, for children such measures are far from sufficient, and can mask the life changing deprivations to their rights they may be experiencing: a certain income level does not necessarily mean a household has all it needs to provide what a child needs for a good start in life, nor that children are prioritized in household expenditures. As such, child poverty must be defined and addressed using a multi-dimensional approach, focusing on whether individual children face deprivations to a range of their rights such as health, education, nutrition, participation and protection from harm, exploitation and discrimination.
- 5 'Social exclusion' focuses on non-participation in social/community life and lack of access to rights which should be available to all citizens, emphasising the multi-dimensional forms and dynamic processes involved. But there is as yet no agreed child-centred definition of 'social exclusion', which would address, for example, the exclusion of some children's from the world of children as a whole.
- 6 In 2006 the EU Social Inclusion Process was integrated, as one distinct strand, within a broader process, the EU Social Protection and Social Inclusion process. This brings together the EU's social inclusion process with strands on pensions and on health care and long-term care.
- 7 Presidency Conclusions, Council of the European Union 23/24(2006), Brussels.
- 8 Frazer H., Marlier E. & Nicaise I. (2010) A Social Inclusion Roadmap For Europe 2020 – an independent study commissioned by the Belgian Ministry of Social Integration in the context of the 2010 Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), Chapter 2 – Child Poverty and Social Exclusion (Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise 2010).
- 9 Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise (2010).
- 10 See, for instance, the UNICEF summary of evidence for the long-term advantages of high quality early childhood education and care (UNICEF, 2008).
- 11 Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise (2010).
- 12 Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise (2010).
- 13 The Social Protection Committee is the body that is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the EU's Social Protection and Social Inclusion process. It consists of senior officials from all Member States and from the European Commission.
- 14 Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise (2010).
- 15 Social Protection Committee (2008): Child Poverty and Well-Being in the EU: current status and way forward, European Commission.
- 16 Tackling Child Poverty And Promoting The Social Inclusion Of Children In The EU (2007), Report Of The Network Of Social Inclusion Independent Experts
- 17 Frazer H., Marlier E. (2007) Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children in the EU: Key lessons, European Commission.
- 18 The Joint Report and the supporting document can be found on the Commission web site at http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/joint_reports_en.htm#2008
- 19 For a full analysis of indicators used to monitor and measure child well-being see Eurochild Policy Briefing Indicators: an important tool for advancing child well-being, prepared as a background paper for the 2009 Eurochild Annual Conference, November 2009.
- 20 UNICEF (2008) An overview of child well-being in rich countries, Innocenti Report Card 7, Florence.
- 21 Eurochild (2007) A child rights approach to child poverty: Discussion Paper.
- 22 Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise (2010).
- 23 Commission Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market, Brussels, 30.09.2008
- 24 Frazer, H. and Marlier, E. (2007), Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children in the EU – Key lessons. Synthesis Report, European Commission .
- 25 Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise (2010).
- 26 Marie-Thérèse Letablier, Angela Luci, Antoine Math, Olivier Thévenon (2009), The Costs of Raising Children and the Effectiveness of policies to support parenthood in European countries: a Literature Review.
- 27 Commission Staff Working Document (2010), Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, Brussels.
- 28 Frazer H., Marlier E. (2009) Minimum Income Schemes across EU Member States, EU Network of National Independent Experts on Social Inclusion.
- 29 Social Protection Committee, Child Poverty and Well-Being in the EU(2008): current status and way forward, European Commission.
- 30 COFACE Recommendations on active inclusion, a tool for fighting family poverty, 16 March 2009.
- 31 'Relative child poverty' is defined as the percentage of children living below a certain poverty threshold, usually a percentage of the national median income. At EU level the poverty risk threshold is set of 60% of the national median equivalised household income. An important component of attempts to measure child poverty is the equivalence scales used, which weight the needs of different members of within households. The most commonly referred to are the 'original' and the 'modified' OECD scales, with the latter being predominantly applied in the EU context. Both scales assign the weight of 1 to the first adult. However, while the original OECD scale assigns 0,7 and 0,5 to further adults and children below 16 respectively, for the modified OECD scale the respective weights are 0,5 and 0,3. The effect of using the modified scale is a significant reduction in the statistics on child poverty. For further discussion, see European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2009) Developing indicators for the protection, respect and promotion of the rights of the child in the European Union.

- 32 Eurostat (2010), Combating poverty and social exclusion: A statistical portrait of the European Union 2010, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- 33 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2009), Developing indicators for the protection, respect and promotion of the rights of the child in the European Union.
- 34 UNICEF (2008), An overview of child well-being in rich countries, Innocenti Report Card 7, Florence
- 35 For the Family Affluence Scale (part of WHO's survey of Health Behaviour in School-age Children) 4 questions are asked: does your family own a car, van or truck?; do you have your own bedroom for yourself?; during the past 12 months, how many times did you travel away on holiday with your family?; how many computers does your family own?
- 36 The educational possessions (OECD-PISA) scale includes the items: a desk for study; a quiet place to work; a computer for schoolwork; educational software; an internet connection; a calculator; a dictionary; school textbooks.
- 37 COFACE Position on reconciling family life, private life and professional life to prevent poverty and social exclusion, 15-16 December 2008.
- 38 OECD (2008) Babies and Bosses: Balancing work and family life, policy brief. The brief summarises information from a series of volumes the same name which covered particular OECD Member States between 2002 and 2007.
- 39 Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (tenth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391/EEC).
- 40 Council Directive 93/104/EC, OJ L 307, of 23 November 1993 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, and Council Directive 2003/88/EC, OJ L 299, of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organization of working time. An Amended proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2003/88/EC concerning certain aspects of the organization of working time, with Commission Directive COM (2005) 246 final, which would end the 'opt-out' provision, under which individual workers can waive the right to work no more than 48 hours (net) per week (i.e. not including rest periods) however it has not reached political agreement in the Council of Ministers. The opt-out has been used almost exclusively by the UK.
- 41 Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC.
- 42 Oxfam International/European Women's Lobby (2010) Women's poverty and social exclusion in the European Union at a time of recession.
- 43 E.g.s 'Leave Arrangements for Workers with Children' (1994), 'A Review of Services for Young Children in the European Union 1990-95' (1996), 'Family Day Care in Europe' (1995).
- 44 Commission Communication, COM(2008) 635 final: A better work-life balance: stronger support for reconciling, professional, private and family life, Brussels.
- 45 Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave.
- 46 http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm
- 47 Peter Moss(ed), International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research (2009), Institute of Education, University of London. See: <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file52778.pdf> .
- 48 <http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database>
- 49 UNICEF (2008) The child care transition, Innocenti Report Card 8, Florence.
- 50 Presidency Conclusions, SN 100/1/02 REV 1, 15-16 March 2002, Barcelona European Council.
- 51 European Commission, COM(2008) 638 final: Implementation of the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities for pre-school children, Brussels.
- 52 The provision of childcare services A comparative review of 30 European countries, European Commission's Expert Group on Gender and Employment Issues (EGGE), March 2009.
- 53 Council conclusions(2009/C 119/02), of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') .
- 54 Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA P9 Eurydice) Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities through Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe.
- 55 Eurochild, Improving the well-being of young children in Europe: the role of early years services, Seminar Background Paper, European Parliament, Brussels, 8 April 2008.
- 56 Children in Europe (2008) Young children and their services: developing a European approach, discussion paper.
- 57 European Commission, COM (2008) 638 final, Implementation of the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities for pre-school children, Brussels.
- 58 European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2009) Childcare Services in Europe.
- 59 Cleveland, G. and M. Krashinsky, 2003, Financing ECEC Services in OECD Countries, University of Toronto, Toronto.
- 60 European Commission Expert Group on Gender and Employment Issues (2009) The provision of childcare services: a comparative review of 30 European Countries, Luxembourg: European Commission.
- 61 European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile the Employment and Family Responsibilities of Men and Women (1996) Quality Targets in Services for Young Children; Proposals for a Ten Year Action Programme; Children in Europe (2008) Young children and their services: developing a European approach, discussion paper.
- 62 UNICEF (2008), The child care transition, Innocenti Report Card 8, Florence.
- 63 Council conclusions (2009/C 119/02), of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') .
- 64 Council conclusions 2010/C 135/02 of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training.
- 65 See Knowledge System for Lifelong Learning, www.ksll.net
- 66 See Inclusion and education in European countries, Muskens, G. August 2009, an independent report commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture.
- 67 Commission Communication COM(2008) 423 final: GREEN PAPER Migration & mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems,
- 68 Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background (November 2009), For details of work on migration and education see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/focus/focus842_en.htm.
- 69 PICUM (2009), Undocumented Children in Europe: Invisible Victims of Immigration Restrictions
- 70 Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion, Roma Children in South East Europe, UNICEF, 2007, pp 45.
- 71 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment 1 (2001) , The Aims of Education.
- 72 World Health Organisation Europe Region, "European strategy for child and adolescent health and development," (2005) http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/79400/E87710.pdf
- 73 World Health Organisation Europe Region, "European strategy for child and adolescent health and development," (2005) http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/79400/E87710.pdf
- 74 Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise (2010).
- 75 European Commission, COM (2007) 630 final, White Paper: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/public_health/european_health_strategy/c11579_en.htm
- 76 European Parliament Decision 1350/2007/EC of 23 October 2007 http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/public_health/european_health_strategy/c11503b_en.htm
- 77 http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/youth/index_en.htm
- 78 European Parliament Resolution C 319 of 20 November 2008 http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/youth/ef0007_en.htm
- 79 European Commission COM(2009) 567 final, Solidarity in Health: Reducing Health Inequalities in the EU, European Commission, Brussels.

- 80 www.health-gradient.eu
- 81 Council Conclusions 9507/04 (Press 163) on alcohol and young people, 1 and 2 June 2004; European Commission COM (2006) 625 final 'An EU Strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm'.
- 82 Council Directive 2003/33/EC of 26 May, 2003 on the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to the advertising and sponsorship of tobacco products, 26 May 2003; European Commission, COM(2007) 27 final: Green Paper 'Towards a Europe free from tobacco smoke: policy options at EU level'.
- 83 European Commission, COM(2007) 279 final, White Paper 'A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related issues'.
- 84 European Commission, COM(2005) 654 final, on combating HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in the neighbouring countries 2006-2009.
- 85 European Commission Proposal, COM(2008) 9 final, for a European Parliament and Council Directive on the safety of toys.
- 86 European Commission Regulation laying down detailed rules for applying Regulation 1234/2007, of 10 July 2008, as regards Community aid for supplying milk and certain milk products to pupils in educational establishments; Regulation 288/2009 of 7 April 2009 is laying down detailed rules for applying Regulation 1234/2007 as regards Community aid for supplying fruits and vegetables (etc.) to children in educational establishments.
- 87 European Commission, COM(2009) 567 final, Solidarity in Health: Reducing Health Inequalities in the EU, European Commission, Brussels.
- 88 <http://www.ec-mental-health-process.net/>
- 89 http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/docs/consensus_youth_en.pdf
- 90 WHO (2005) Mental health: facing the challenges, building solutions. Copenhagen, WHO, 2005.
- 91 Rigby M, (2009) 'Indicators of child health as a key component of child well-being', in ChildONEurope, The ongoing debate on the assessment of children's conditions of life, Proceedings of the seminar on Child Well-Being Indicators, Florence
- 92 Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania and Slovenia are not OECD members.
- 93 <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/Life-stages/child-and-adolescent-health/facts-and-figures>
- 95 Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise (2010).
- 96 FEANTSA (2007) Child Homelessness in Europe: An overview of emerging trends.
- 97 European Parliament Decision 1350/2007/EC of date 23 October 2007 http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/public_health/european_health_strategy/c11503b_en.htm
- 98 Frazer H., Marlier E. (2009) Homelessness and housing exclusion across EU Member States, Social Inclusion Policy and Practice, CEPS/INSTEAD.
- 99 D. Dalbokova, M. Krzyzanowski and S. Lloyd (2007) Children's Health and the Environment in Europe: A Baseline Assessment, WHO.
- 100 WHO Europe (2010) Health and Environment in Europe: progress assessment, Copenhagen.
- 101 FEANTSA (ibid).
- 102 European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions (2009) Second European Quality of Life Survey.
- 103 ODI (2009): Children in Times of Economic Crisis: Past lessons, future policies.
- 104 Oxfam International/European Women's Lobby (2010) Women's poverty and social exclusion in the European Union at a time of recession.
- 107 Olivia Lind Haldorsson (2009), speech on 'Children's rights and child protection within the EU', Save the Children seminar, Stockholm.
- 108 NSPCC (2009), Proposed revision of EU Framework Decision "on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography", Position Paper.
- 109 European Commission, COM (2010) 213/3, Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010 – 2014).
- 111 Rustemier, S. with Newell, P. (2005) Violence Against Children in Europe: A preliminary review of research, Innocenti Research Centre, UNICEF.
- 112 Fundamental Rights Agency (2009) Developing indicators for the protection, respect and promotion of the rights of the child in the European Union.
- 113 Fundamental Rights Agency (2009) Child Trafficking in the European Union: challenges, perspectives and good practices.
- 114 <http://www.transmonee.org/>
- 115 Ruxton S. (2005) What About Us?: Children's Rights in the European Union, Euronet .
- 116 Lansdown G (2005) The Evolving Capacities of the Child, Innocenti Insight, Florence: UNICEF.
- 117 Flash Eurobarometer 235 (2008): The Rights of the Child and Flash Eurobarometer 273(2009): The Rights of the Child
- 118 http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm
- 119 L'Observatoire de l'Enfance, de la Jeunesse et de l'Aide à la Jeunesse, L'enquête sur la participation des jeunes âgés de 10 à 18 ans en Communauté française de Belgique, April 2007.
- 120 UNICEF, Guidance on Meaningful Child Participation (forthcoming as part of the EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit.
- 121 Frazer, Marlier & Nicaise (2010).
- 122 Council Resolution 2003/C295/04 of 25 November 2003 on common objectives for participation by and information for young people.
- 123 European Communication COM(2005) 206 final on European policies concerning youth, Brussels.
- 124 If adopted, Article I-47 of the European Constitution would have bolster the principle of participatory democracy. Clause 4 in particular, would enable 1 million children in the EU, as European citizens, to ask the European Commission to submit a proposal on matters where they consider their rights should be implemented.
- 125 European Commission ,COM (2007) 498 final, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions(SEC (2007) 1084 and 1093), on "Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society", Brussels.
- 126 European Council 9133/08, Draft Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Government of the Member States JEUN53, SOC269, meeting within the Council, on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, Brussels.
- 127 Available at http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1084_en.pdf
- 128 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0200:FIN:EN:PDF>
- 129 Social Protection Committee (2008) & Marlier and Atkinson (2010).



Responsible Editor: Julien Van Geertsom, Avenue du Roi Albert-II 30, 1000 Bruxelles



POD | Maatschappelijke Integratie
SPP | Intégration Sociale

eu trio.be