



9th Meeting of the National Child Guarantee Coordinators

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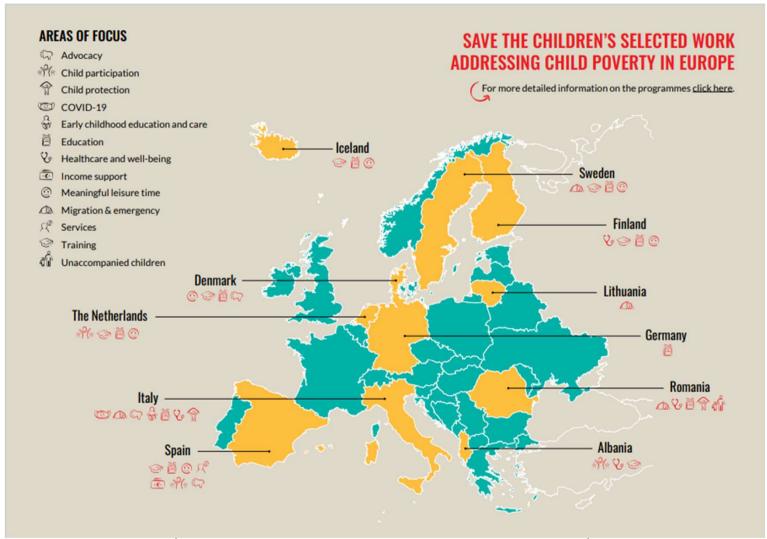
GUARANTEEING CHILDREN'S FUTURE (link)

- Builds on input received by Save the Children national members and offices from 14 countries.
- Analysis of the status of child poverty in Europe and implementation of the Child Guarantee (CG):
 - National Action Plans (NAP) and policies within CG service areas
 - Use of national and EU funds
 - CSOs and children involvement
 - Monitoring and evaluation





MAP - SAVE THE CHILDREN SELECTED PROGRAMS (here)





COUNTRY PAGES



CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

3.357.000

(EUROSTAT)

23.5%

AROPE 2020 | AROPE 2021

KEY FACTS/FIGURES

- · According to Eurostat, in 2021, more than 3 million children in Germany (23,5% of all children) were growing up at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE-Indicator), 191
- · According to the national statistical institute, every fifth child in Germany grows up in income poverty (20,8% in 2021). 200
- . The pandemic's long-term effects are still affecting children's physical and psychological well-being, 1 in 3 children suffers from psychological problems. Anxiety, depressive symptoms, and psychosomatic complaints among children have increased over the last few years.
- · Low-income families relying on government benefits cannot afford healthy food for their

THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The consequences of the lockdowns imposed by the pandemic have significantly hit children, since their schools, care facilities, youth centres and other institutions were closed for long periods. This affected the time normally spent with friends and relatives other than the core

CHILDREN AT RISK in Germany:

- · Children with migrant background
- · Children from single parent families
- Children from low-income families
- · Children from large disadvantaged families

family, lowered chances to do sports or other activities, and increased feelings of loneliness and anxiety about the future. Besides, children were increasingly exposed to conflict and violent situations at home 201.

The German authorities launched a programme to reduce the negative effects on children in education, providing resources to compensate for learning backlogs in schools as well as leisure-oriented social learning and psychosocial support. Social work at schools has been strengthened in several federal states as well as cooperation with extracurricular learning venues, therefore improving the school capacity to reach children at risk of poverty or exclusion.

THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

Germany has seen an increase in energy prices of a staggering 38,4% in November 2022, even more (around 40%) in the months before. Recent data show that low-income families relying on government benefits cannot afford healthy food200 for their children - this situation got worse with rising nutrition costs of around 20% in late 2022. The umbrella foodbank organisation, Tafel Deutschland, registered a 50% increase in people in need since the beginning of the year³⁰³.

The support measures launched by the German government include, amongst others, a oneoff energy bonus for people in employment, a temporary reduction of VAT for gas (from 19 to 7%), tax discounts on petrol and subsidised public transport.

THE CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS

The country has witnessed an increase in vectorborne diseases, allergic and respiratory diseases, and exposure to extreme weather events and UV radiation. Children are particularly affected as they are subject to physiological peculiarities that make it difficult for them to react to environmental influences, such as heat, and because their well-being often depends on caregivers²⁰⁴. Due to the climate-related negative effects on the agricultural sector, healthy eating and nutrition have become more expensive²⁰⁵. Besides, the country has been affected by severe floods, causing deaths and widespread damage. In 2021, 180 people lost their lives due to flooding, and many more lost their homes³⁰⁶

At the moment, there are no effective measures to redistribute the costs of climate change and climate policy. In 2021, the elected government mentioned a social compensation mechanism

for private households to compensate for the rising energy prices called "Klimageld"227. In the summer of 2022, the Minister for Social Affairs Hubertus Heil suggested it should have a redistributive character and support low-income households on a regular basis 200. However, to date there is no draft law or even a timeline.

THE GERMAN CHILD **GUARANTEE ACTION PLAN** AND KEY SERVICE AREAS

The German national action plan hasn't been available before the final edit of this report. Reasons for the delay are the change of government and minister in the Ministry of Family Affairs at the beginning of 2022 and thus a delay in starting the process. Further delays are due to a complex coordination process between different federal ministries and levels of the federal state, as the government states. Save the Children will assess these delays based on the outcome of the process. Save the Children expects that it leads to an ambitious and coherent action plan. The following remarks are on issues that Save the Children Germany wants to highlight and should be addressed in the action plan.

CHILD GUARANTEE SERVICE AREAS



In Germany the expansion of day-care places has increased over the last few years and is available for all children due to subsidized fees. Nevertheless, the high demand for ECEC and lack of educated staff exclude vulnerable children such as children in migration and children living with unemployed caretakers. There is little knowledge of the legal support system, families are entitled to, and a lack of poverty-sensitive communication.







CHILD POVERTY MATRIX

CHILD POVERTY MATRIX

The matrix presents relevant data collected by Save the Children while working on this report. This information should feed into the national monitoring and evaluation systems of the Child Guarantee National Action Plans and child poverty reduction policies.

For more detailed information, please contact Save the Children.

CHILD POVERTY

EU INDICATORS

	Eurostat: Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion			Eurostat: Material Deprivation Rate			National targets		
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021			
DK	13,8%	13,4%	14,0%	8,5%	6,7%	7,5%	Lift 30.000 persons out of poverty by 2030		
FI	13,8%	14,5%	13,2%	8,8%	7,1%	8,2%	Lift 30 000 children out of poverty by 2030		
DE	15,4%	22,3%	23,5%	8%	6,2%	15,2%	Lift 1,2 million persons out of poverty by 2030		
IT	27,1%	28,9%	29,7%	16,3%	13,8%	13,0%	Lift 3,2 million persons out of poverty by 2030		
LT	25,8%	23,1%	21,6%	21,2%	16,8%	17,8%	Lift 223,000 persons out of poverty by 2030		
NL	15,4%	15,8%	14,9%	5,8%	5,8%	6,0%	Single broad target of child poverty reduction by 50% by 2030		
PL	16,2%	16,1%	16,5%	9%	8,1%	6,2%	Lift 1,5 million persons out of poverty by 2030		
RO	39,1%	40,7%	41,5%	35,2%	29,8%	36,1%	Lift 2,5 million persons out of poverty by 2030		
ES	31,0%	31,8%	33,4%	15,4%	15,1%	18,6%	Reduce Child AROPE 2019 rates by 30,3% or 8.6 percentage points by 2030		
SE	23,0%	20,2%	19,7%	6,8%	7,7%	7,1%	Reduce Child AROPE by 2030 by 5,000.		

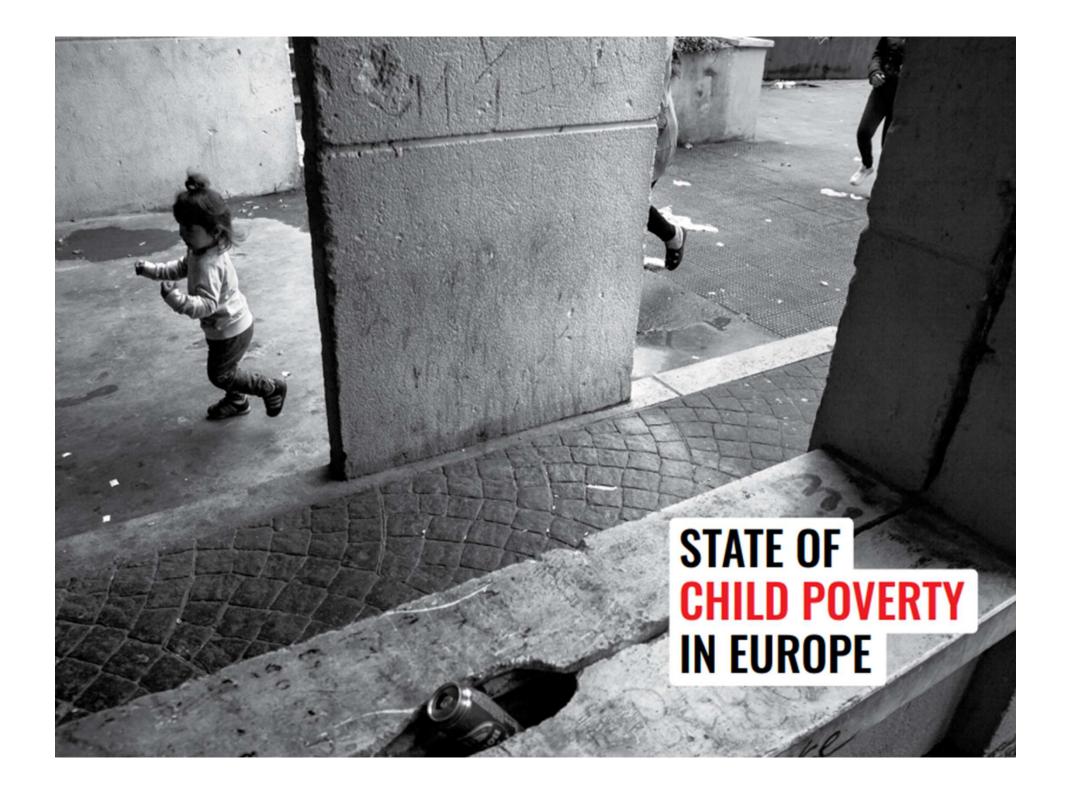
RELEVANT INDICATORS USED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

	Indicator	2019	2020	2021	2022
AL	Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (INSTAT - national child poverty index)	23,0%	21,8%	22,0%	
DK	Children under the age of 18 years living in poverty		4,9%		
	Children at risk of poverty and social exclusion		13,5%		
FI	Children living in low-income households (less than 60% of median income)	12,4%	11,1%	11,9%	
	Single parent families in low-income households	26,7%	23,7%	25,9%	
	Families with children receiving social assistance (the basic minimum allowance for living costs)	10,5%	10,5%	9,4%	
DE	Children living at risk of poverty (less than 60% of median income)	20,5%	20,4%	20,8%	
	Children in Social Code book II - basic social service for unemployed people and their families.	13,3%	13,1%	12,4%	13,0%
	Children at risk of poverty			13,1%	
IS	Material deprivation among children			4,2%	
	Children at risk of poverty living outside the capital region			15,8%	
	Children in absolute poverty (ISTAT)	11,4%	13,5%	14,2%	
IT	Children in relative poverty (ISTAT)	22%	20,4%	22%	
	Children in energy poverty (OIPE)			10%	
	Children in poverty		20.7%	23%	
ко	Children involved in work				9%
	Children involved in work under hazardous conditions				5,6%
	Children with migrant background at risk of poverty: non-western	24,5%	22,1%	22,2%	
NL	Children with migrant background at risk of poverty: western	7,1%	6,7%	6,7%	
	Children at risk of poverty	7,4%	6,9%	6,6%	
RO	Children experiencing material and social deprivation	36.8%	40.3%	36.4%	
	Children experiencing severe material and social deprivation	25.8%	29.7%	28.2%	
ES	Public spending (% of GDP) on families and children	1.3%	1.6%		
	Reduction of child poverty due to social transfers (pensions excluded): AROP before transfers minus AROP after transfers (pp)	5.2 pp	6.4 pp	9.4 pp	
SE	At risk of poverty rate for children 0-19 years (less than 60% of median income)	18,3%	18,1%	17,9%	
	At risk of poverty rate for children born in Sweden with foreign born parents	40%	39,8 %	38,9%	

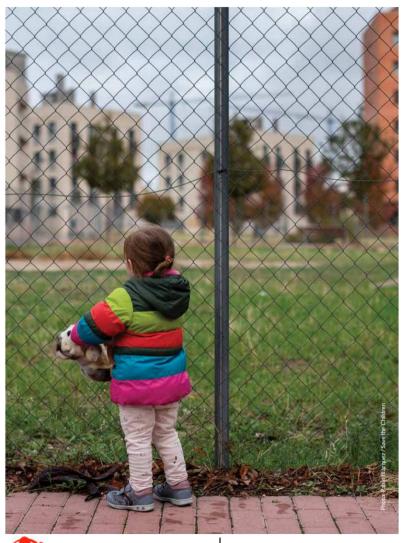
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CHILD POVERTY IN EUROPE



- No European country, no matter how rich, is free of child poverty.
- In 2021, 19.6 millions of children were at risk of poverty (1 in 4, + 200.000).
- We expect these numbers to increase.

THE IMPACT OF INTERLOCKED CRISES

COVID-19: still hitting children hard (e.g. overburdened healthcare and welfare systems – impact on children's mental health)

Cost-of-living crisis: plunging financially stable families into poverty and sinking millions of vulnerable children into deeper poverty.

Climate crisis: current, tangible emergency for European children (e.g. increase of extreme weather events – cities are hotter and more polluted – schools are unusable)



KOSOVO

"My parents were worried about COVID-19. They talked a lot about the number of cases and transmitted a lot of stress to us, they did not spare us from this stress."

(child - 15 years old)

Young Voices Report



FINLAND

"Well, sometimes I notice that mum doesn't buy certain things. And I hear her saying she got a letter about unpaid bills, and that we need to use less water. So, I try to shower less, and I don't really dare drink water when I'm at home⁶⁸."



KOSOVO

"They are not aware that if the planet has no future, neither do we."

(child - 14 years old)

Young Voices Report





THE CHILD GUARANTEE

- We are witnessing a historic political momentum for protecting children's rights in Europe, including the setting up of the Child Guarantee.
- We must now capitalise on this unprecedented instrument and turned it into tangible programmes and policies. The report includes an analysis of the plans under each service areas and a graphic summary of the main achievements and pending challenges.



We must ensure that they are properly implemented



THE NATIONAL ACTION PLANS (NAP)

Finland, Spain and **Italy** have particularly **comprehensive plans** – either part of their national child rights strategy or closely synergised with them.

- FINLAND: NAP includes free comprehensive and upper secondary education, free school meals, free healthcare, and subjective rights to early childhood education. The most vulnerable groups of children are well defined.
 - <u>Challenge:</u> monitoring and evaluation qualitative and quantitative metrics will be specified only in later stage.
- > **SPAIN:** NAP aims to be a holistic blueprint for actions against child poverty until 2030. It includes a proposal to fight energy poverty, address school segregation, improve data collection.
 - Challenge: more strength is needed on ensuring free access to key services.
- > ITALY: NAP result of an inclusive process which resulted in a coherent plan in terms of objectives and identification of gaps.
 - <u>Challenge:</u> identification of the funds that will be used to achieve its goals, data and targets.



FREE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

- Numerous countries prioritised the increase in participation in early childhood education and care, including Sweden, Finland and Italy.
- Several countries addressed the shortage of ECEC places, including Lithuania and the Romanian draft.
- Target vulnerable groups must be prioritised, for example, in Sweden children moving between temporary housing, asylum seekers, and undocumented cannot attend ECEC because applications require a formal address.
- Target lack of qualified staff is a challenge in most countries.



FREE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE





- ✓ ECEC must be **affordable** for all families and **free of charge** for the most vulnerable children
- ✓ All plans must ensure that the supply of places meets the demand
- ✓ Break down the non-financial barriers that prevent vulnerable children from participating
- ✓ Ensure **heavy investments** in education
 - ✓ Support **municipalities**



FREE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Summary of countries' main achievements/positive elements & unresolved issues/pending challenges in ECEC



Main achievements & positive elements

√ Programme "Förskola för fler barn" ("Preschool for more children"): to increase the proportion of children in early childhood education which also includes giving priority to early access for some children in need. When a child turns 3, the municipality automatically reserves a place and informs guardians.

Unresolved issues & pending challenges

X Difficulties for certain groups of children (asylum-seekers, undocumented children, children in temporary housing) to attend ECEC due to, for example, the lack of a formal address.

I Italy

Main achievements & positive elements

Action Plan states the objectives of 50% coverage for full time childcare, and 95% for full time preschool education.

√ National standard for staff working in childcare established by law.

Unresolved issues & pending chollenges

X Low participation rate in ECEC, especially in Southern Italy.

Netherlands

Main achievements & positive elements

√ Investments to improve quality and participation (objective: to increase the number of participation hours, raise the qualification level of ECEC staff to tertiary level, and evaluate equal educational opportunities).

Unresolved issues & pending challenges

X Staff shortage.

Denmark

Unresolved issues & pending challenges

- X High ratio child-caretaker.
- X Lack of staff with adequate education.

Germany

Unresolved issues & pending challenges

X High demand of ECEC services and lack of skilled staff.

+ Finland

Unresolved issues & pending challenges

- X Low participation rate in ECEC compared to European average levels.
- X More resources need to be invested in personnel.

Lithuania

Unresolved issues & pending challenges

X Lack of a concise plan to provide access to ECEC to every child.

Kosovo

Main achievements & pasitive elements

√ Draft Law on Early Childhood Education approved by the government.

Unresolved issues & pending challenges

- X Low enrolment rates by children 0-6 years old
- X Low enrolment rates of children from marginalized communities.
- X Lack of public ECEC services in rural and remote areas.
- X ECEC services provided through a fragmented sectoral approach.
- X Lack of information and awareness among parents.

Romania

Unresolved issues & pending challenges

- X Limited availability of ECEC places (with high disparities between rural and urban areas).
- X Insufficient targeting of children from vulnerable families.

Albania

Unresolved issues & pending challenges

- X Difficult access to ECEC for Roma children and children with disabilities.
- X ECEC very limited/non-existent in rural/remote areas.
- X High child teacher ratio.
- X Lack of qualified ECEC staff.

lceland

Unresplied issues & pending challenges

- X Low salaries and lack of educated staff.
- X Important gap between the parental leave (1 year) and access to ECEC.



FREE EDUCATION

- Positive developments in several countries, including Finland (secondary education for all children until 18yo compulsory and free of charge) and Lithuania (acknowledgment of the national challenges).
- In **Sweden**, the NAP aims at increasing the proportion of children in socio-economically vulnerable families who take part in sports and cultural activities and expand the support for children with disabilities.
- NAPs must be more ambitious and tackle common challenges:
 - Shortage of teachers and high student/teacher ratio
 - Inclusive education initiatives for minority or vulnerable people
 - Lack of adequate funding



FREE EDUCATION

Effective and free access to one healthy meal each school day:

- Good example on the potentiality of the CG provided by Italy: the NAP targets universal access to one school meal in primary schools, with no charge for vulnerable children, as well as the introduction of canteen services for lower secondary schools.
- In **Spain**, only 11% of children are granted free school meals, below the 28,9% child poverty rate, but the plan does not substantially address this issue but we expect a change in the future.



FREE EDUCATION





- ✓ NAPs making clear how proposed activities will be adequately funded
 - ✓ Ensure the **right to education**without any restriction to children
 in need
- ✓ Reduce or eliminate any hidden costs
- ✓ Provide **free school meals** for children in need
- ✓ Eliminate regional and local differences



FREE QUALITY HEALTHCARE

Mental Health:

- Spain proposes to train GPs and teachers to be able to detect mental health problems early
- Italy proposes to reinforce Youth Counselling centres

More effort is needed to protect vulnerable children:

- The Italian NAP gives considerable attention to the access to health care for migrant children and children with disabilities
- The Swedish NAP plan addresses the health inequalities between different groups of children



FREE QUALITY HEALTHCARE





- ✓ Tackle the mental health crisis head on, through preventive and comprehensive policies
 - ✓ Provide all children with unrestricted access to health-care
 - ✓ Ensure the plans make specific mention of measures for **vulnerable children**, such as removing financial, administrative, and language barriers and support children with disabilities



HEALTHY NUTRITION

• Making nutritious food more affordable is a goal of several NAPs, such as the Italian and Dutch one, and in the Romanian draft. The Spanish NAP includes positive measures to give access to leisure and school activities that could be effective as a lever for improved nutrition-related outcomes, such as reducing obesity.





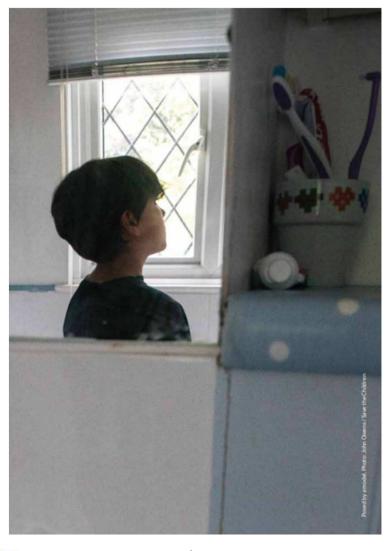
- Ensure that basic welfare and income support are sufficient for families to buy healthy and nutritious food, particularly during this period of crisis
- ✓ Invest in preventative approaches, e.g. awareness campaigns in schools

ADEQUATE HOUSING

- Italy and Spain each have strong reforms on the agenda. The Spanish NAP runs in parallel with the ongoing legislation to reform the housing market and includes key provisions to guarantee access to adequate housing by children in vulnerable situations. A ban on evictions of families with children is foreseen for those in vulnerable situation and without a housing alternative. The Italian NAP includes ambitious new measures to help families to cope with rising housing costs.
- While recognising that the **Swedish** government is working on a homelessness strategy, the plan does not include any quantitative goals to decrease homelessness among families with children.



ADEQUATE HOUSING





- ✓ Invest more in social housing
- ✓ Increase **financial support** to pay rent and other households expenses
- ✓ Support vulnerable families with energy costs, particularly during a cost-of-living crisis
- Enforce legal provisions limiting or prohibiting evictions
- ✓ Ensure that the **best interest** of the child is always taken into account

USE OF EU AND NATIONAL FUNDS

- ✓ Closely link ESF+ funds and Child Guarantee NAPs
- ✓ Ensure CSOs and local authorities have access to dedicated parts of the ESF+ funds or other Cohesion policy funding. EU and national authorities should closely monitor that such use of funds does not disproportionately benefit one of the two type of beneficiaries
- ✓ Use **experiences and lessons learnt** from the CG process to feed into the next ESF+ funding period
- ✓ Support the NAP with **specific budget** and link it with running services at the regional and municipality level
- ✓ Ensure that enough resources are allocated to support the measures included in the plans, and these resources are properly used.



INDICATORS

- Good examples from the Lithuanian NAP to measure child poverty via national statistics and multiple methods of evaluation. Also in Sweden, the proposed indicators are relevant and likely to be followed.
- Some national indicators are preliminary: in Spain, the set of indicators included in the NAP is expected to be finalised in the first quarter of 2023.
- Others need further clarification: in Italy, the monitoring and evaluation system must be strong enough to overcome fragmented and inconsistent data across all areas.
- Indicators are missing in the Dutch and Danish NAPs, with the latter highlighting that different definitions of poverty used by governmental bodies inhibits the setting of indicators and the monitoring of their actions.



TARGETS

- The national targets to fight child poverty and social exclusion differ widely across countries.
- In **Finland** and **Lithuania**, they have been evaluated as appropriated. The **Romanian** draft includes ten expected results, among which lifting 500.000 children out of poverty.
- In many NAPs targets are not included, not backed by official data, and more connected with general outputs rather than with concrete outcomes.



A proper monitoring and evaluation system is necessary to ensure that the CG will be properly implemented, and that the EU and its Member Stares will fully capitalise on the potentiality of this unprecedented instrument.



RECCOMENDATIONS

- ✓ Establish a sound system for **monitoring** and **evaluation** , including the meaningful participation of stakeholders
- ✓ Invest in upgrading data collection
- ✓ Define specific targets (prefer numbers over 'more children') and subtargets
- ✓ Ensure **coherence** with targets defined in other strategies and policies
- ✓ Set targets at the **territorial and local level**, stimulating both the government and local administrations to invest higher resources and direct them towards the most deprived areas



INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

- In **Finland**, CSOs and children participated in the development of the NAP, and their views were included in it. Children also participated in the development of the national strategy through workshops, remote event, and electronic surveys.
- In Spain, Romania, Germany, and Italy, the drafting of the NAPs involved CSOs and children too. In Spain, children are expected to participate in the governance of the plan's implementation through national and regional structures. In Germany, CSOs are waiting to see how the input of children and CSOs will be reflected in the plan.
- In Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden, CSOs and children were involved in less structured and less impactful ways.
- Germany, Finland, Sweden, and Italy NAPs include indications on how to involve children, families and CSOs in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their Plans.



RECCOMENDATIONS

- ✓ Define clear plans for the involvement of CSOs and children, specifying how and when the involvement will take place
- ✓ Establish participation channels at the regional and local levels too
- ✓ Prioritise stakeholders' participation in all phases
- ✓ Keep good practices in the radar
- ✓ Ensure the inclusion of the **most vulnerable groups** of children and the organisation working to protect their rights





THANK YOU Save the Children