

THE CHILD GUARANTEE: BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DISADVANTAGE

PHASE III OF THE PREPARATORY ACTION FOR A CHILD GUARANTEE



Funded by
the European Union

Phase III of the European Child Guarantee:

The **'European Child Guarantee,'** is the initiative of the European Commission which aims to ensure that children in need and facing disadvantages in the European Union enjoy effective access to key essential services to ensure progressive realisation of children's rights in Europe. The Council of the European Union unanimously adopted the [Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee \(ECG\)](#) on 14 June 2021. The Recommendation foresees that by 15 March 2022, all 27 Member States will develop national action plans, which should cover the period until 2030, identifying specific groups of children who should benefit from the Guarantee, setting targets to be achieved, outlining corresponding measures, indicating the sources of necessary funding and outlining monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

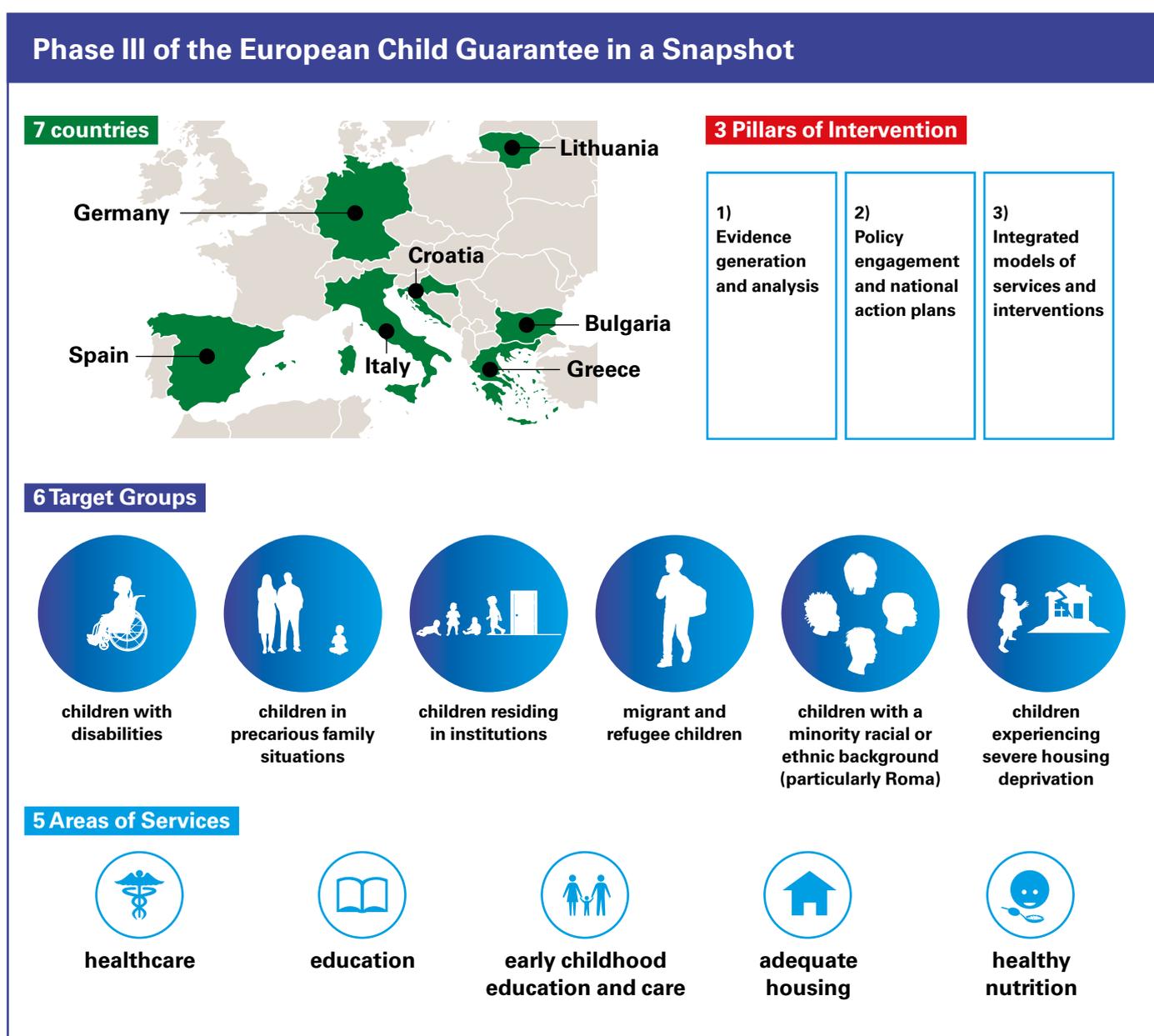
UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) has partnered with the European Commission to test how the European Child Guarantee could work in practice, which constitutes the third phase of the preparatory action of the ECG. This includes pilot projects in seven Member States: **Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania and Spain** - which will inform the EU-wide implementation of the ECG as well as showcase innovative approaches for the social inclusion of the most disadvantaged children.

Programmatic
Update
April 2022

The Main Results of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee are:

1. **Supporting governments in developing European Child Guarantee National Action Plans** to address child poverty and social exclusion of children based on a comprehensive policy and programme deep dive analysis.
2. **Pilot and assess innovative and evidenced-based models of services and interventions** focused on some of the most disadvantaged children as well as concrete strategies to reach the most vulnerable children.
3. **Inform the implementation of the EU-wide Child Guarantee** through recommendations and lessons learnt from all the different activities in the pilot experience of Phase III.

To learn more about the pilot projects in the 7 countries participating in the Phase III of the Preparatory Action for the ECG, [click HERE](#).



National Action Plans For The European Child Guarantee



Deep Dive Analysis

Deep Dive Analyses have been carried out in the 7 pilot countries. They are designed to provide information and evidence that the governments in the seven pilot countries need in order to develop evidence-informed European Child Guarantee National Action Plans (NAPs). These analyses have generated knowledge on the most disadvantaged children in each country that need effective access to key services, and proposed indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the ECG. They have also generated knowledge on what has determined the success of interventions and policies at national, regional, and local level across the key service areas of the ECG to advise governments on possible measures for implementing the ECG. They Deep Dive Analysis were developed in a coordinated and multi-sector manner and led by governments.

The main reports of the Deep Dive Analysis and the respective Policy briefs, can be found here:

- [Lithuania](#)
- [Germany](#)
- [Spain](#)
- [Croatia](#)
- [Bulgaria](#)
- [Greece](#)

ECG NAPs have been developed in the seven pilot Member States under the leadership of ECG National Coordinators or other designated actors. UNICEF together with the governments has worked to ensure that these plans are based on robust evidence and rely on the findings and recommendations of the Deep Dives analyses undertaken in each country, and that they are participatory and have sound monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

In the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, most of the countries are adapting their national action plans to include measures that will address the basic need for protection and access to services for refugee children from Ukraine.

By the time this Programmatic Update was drafted, the ECG NAPs for Croatia, Spain and Greece were submitted to the European Commission. These were advanced drafts validated by key stakeholders; however, they are still to be consulted will wider range of actors including children, and civil society organisation, to be finalised and officially approved.

It is to be noted that governments have shown great commitment to ensuring that the NAPs are comprehensive and developed in a participatory way. However, it seems that in most cases, the time at the disposal of countries to undertake a comprehensive process to develop NAPs has not been sufficient and governments will require more time to finalise the development, consult and finalize the NAPs. The development of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework has proven particularly challenging for almost all countries, most of the countries requesting support of UNICEF. In some countries such as Germany and Bulgaria, national elections have further contributed to delaying the process.

Deep Dive Analysis:

“Analysis of policies, programmes, services, budgets, and mechanisms addressing child poverty and social exclusion in the countries to inform the Child Guarantee National Action Plans.”

<p>Lithuania</p> 	<p>A working group has been established for the development of the NAP, and a draft plan has been developed based on the findings of the Deep Dive analysis for Lithuania. Final inputs by some key institutions are still expected at the moment of this update.</p> <p>The final draft NAP will be translated in a child-friendly language and consulted with children so that their voices are reflected in the plan. Children will be involved through the newly established Child Council under the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Agency. The participation of the children from the ECG target groups is prioritized for this exercise.</p> <p>The draft has been already presented to the National Child Welfare Council under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, chaired by the Minister of Social Security and Labour. This Council is also expected to endorse the final NAP, once finalized. It is expected that the NAP will be formally approved via a Ministerial decision. The Council will also be the body in charge of the monitoring of the implementation and serve as a platform for its coordination. In addition, the Parliament will also play an oversight role through its Human Rights and Social Affairs and Labour Committees.</p>
<p>Spain</p> 	<p>The drafting of the NAP was led by the line Ministry and the High commissioner for child poverty and supported by UNICEF. A draft NAP was already developed in December 2021 and shared widely with line Ministries and local government authorities for their revision and endorsement of the planned measures. Because of the high level of country decentralization, one of the critical issues reflected in the NAP was the role of the regions and of the local authorities in planning and implementing the NAP.</p> <p>The consultation process has been organized in parallel with its drafting. The first draft has already been shared publicly with CSOs for writing contributions and online workshops have been carried out with other stakeholders such as academia or interest groups. The process of consultation with children has also been organized in parallel, including the development of a child-friendly version of the NAP and the organization of several consultation meetings with children of various backgrounds and age groups in the framework of National Council for Child Participation.</p> <p>The NAP is structured along 3 axes, including different objectives and draft measures for each of the of the of the axis. The 3 axes are: 1) child poverty and social protection; 2) social rights and quality and inclusive services; 3) inclusive and participatory environment for children.</p> <p>The draft has to go for approval to the CoM, and before that the relevant Ministries have to see it again and scrutinize their measures. Spain has submitted an advanced draft for EC comments, but the final NAP will not be submitted before final approval by the Spanish government.</p>
<p>Bulgaria</p> 	<p>The Working Group, set up to draft the NAP and chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, includes more than 60 members, including national institution and agencies, local authorities, civil society organisations, private sector associations, UNICEF and UNHCR. The Deep Dive analysis has been reviewed by line ministries which have provided their feedback and has been used extensively to inform the drafting of the NAP. The NAP is expected to be a comprehensive document based on the vision of the government to consolidate in one place all the sectoral policies covered by the Child Guarantee, as well as other areas such as social protection measures and social services.</p> <p>The NAP development process has been delayed due to the decision of the Government to expand its scope and to include specific measures and interventions targeted at refugee families and children from Ukraine. The NAP will be published for public consultation as per national legislation. UNICEF will seek to prepare a child-friendly version of the NAP once it is finalized and ensure it is widely consulted with children.</p> <p>Bulgaria will monitor and coordinate the implementation of the ECG NAP through an inter institutional working group at a political level, chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and involving all key line ministries and institutions, which will be complemented by a permanent expert group to provide technical support and monitor its implementation.</p>

<p>Croatia</p> 	<p>UNICEF Croatia is a member of the Working Group set up for the development of the NAP, together with more than 20 other governmental institutions and key stakeholders. The Deep Dive has been informing the process of NAP development and the final NAP reflects its key recommendations. UNICEF is supporting the NAP development process with a technical consultant supporting the work of the ECG National Coordinator.</p> <p>UNICEF Croatia has supported consultations with children and young people, which were conducted in several related phases. Adolescents and youth, members of the Advisory Board for Children’s Participation of UNICEF Croatia, UNICEF Young Ambassadors for the Rights of Children and Youth and young people from Medimurje County who participated in UNICEF’s 21st Century Skills Program UPSHIFT, discussed on the proposal of objectives and priorities defined in the draft of the NAP. An online survey “Child Guarantee- what children and young people think” was launched through the ZABUM voice platform in which young people could express their opinion. In addition, consultations with children and young people were conducted during February and March 2022 through facilitated group interviews. The Ombudsperson for Children has conducted additional consultations with high school children in different areas of the country. The child participation report was shared with the working group.</p> <p>An advanced draft has been submitted to the European Commission. Further consultations of stakeholders and a public consultation process are to be organized in the coming weeks as per national legislation, after which the NAP will be formally adopted by the government and reports on its implementations will be submitted to Parliament. While the draft NAP contains a monitoring framework, UNICEF will further support the National Coordinator and working group to further advance this framework.</p>
<p>Greece</p> 	<p>Greece has established a Working Group comprised of key Ministries to work on the development of the NAP and provide input including new measures, recommendations and key actions. A preliminary draft has been submitted to the European Commission at the end of March 2022.</p> <p>EKKA, the ECG National Coordinator, designed and shared a questionnaire with regional and local authorities asking for their input and data on the 5 axons of the ECG. During February EKKA organized a webinar to discuss the thematic areas of the questionnaire with regional and local authorities as well as universities, civil society and ministries. A task force comprised of EKKA, IOVE (Foundation for economic and industrial research) and UNICEF was established to create the first draft of the NAP monitoring framework to align with the NAP, recommendations of the Deep Dive Analysis. UNICEF has supported the drafting process with two technical consultants working exclusively on compiling and editing the recommendations, proposed measures, M&E framework and data collection tools.</p> <p>UNICEF in cooperation with the Ombudswoman for children rights, organized two focus group discussions with children and young adults, including children with disabilities, Roma children, and children living in institutions. The National Coordinator held additional focus group discussions with children from vulnerable groups. A questionnaire for children (12-17 years old) has also been prepared to be shared with secondary level schools all around Greece.</p>

<p>Italy</p> 	<p>A drafting Commission has been set up in December 2021, to draft the NAP comprised of key line Ministries, civil society organisations, academia and UNICEF. A first draft of the NAP has been developed by the Commission and has been delivered to the European Commission.</p> <p>The Deep Dive analysis has been shared with the Commission since January 2022 and has led to a dialogue on recommendations and envisaged measures. The Deep Dive analysis has been welcomed and its main results have been considered as basis for the first draft of the NAP.</p> <p>The president of the Commission has recently been confirmed as the National Coordinator for the Child Guarantee in Italy.</p> <p>The commission is organised in 4 thematic sub-groups: education and childcare (ECD), health and mental health and nutrition, poverty and housing (including alternative care), and governance including vertical and horizontal.</p> <p>The final draft prepared by the Commission identifies the potential beneficiaries of the ECG into broad groups and numerically more limited groups with high poverty intensity who do not access key entitlements. The draft plan places great emphasis on intersectoral integration, promotion of essential levels of services, increasing access to basic services, with a high focus on inclusive education.</p> <p>The Draft NAP set up a 'Cabinet' for the governance of the ECG, composed of representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Family Department, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the State-Regions Conference and the Associations of municipality (ANCI).</p> <p>The Youth Advocacy Board was consulted in February and a participatory process on the main challenges of ECG was carried out through a survey and an ad hoc meeting in December, January and February.</p> <p>The draft of NAP has been presented at the National Observatory on childhood and adolescence, which is under the presidency of the Council of Ministers. Italy intends to submit an advanced draft to the Commission for their review, after which another of consultations will follow.</p>
<p>Germany</p> 	<p>The government of Germany has started the process of preparation of the NAP, however, the process has been delayed due to the national elections. The Ministry of Family Affairs is setting up an internal process with the other Ministries to organize the work. The Deep Dive analysis is informing the discussions around the NAP. The Ministry has asked the Deutsches Jugendinstitut (DJI) to establish the process supporting on consultation process, especially one with children and young people. Civil society has been activating around the NAP and has prepared a report with recommendations.</p>

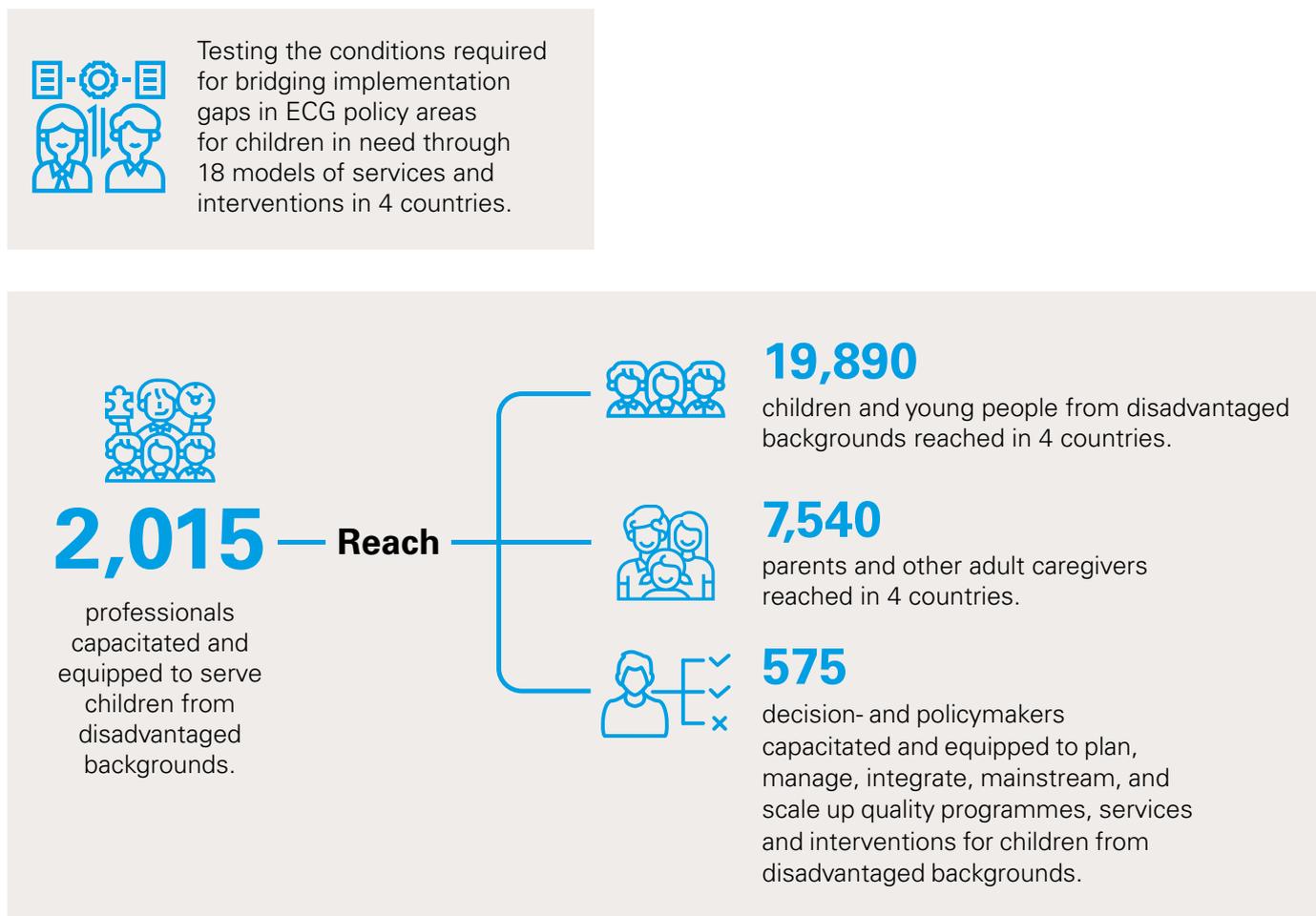
Innovative and evidence-based models of services for the most disadvantaged children

In **4 countries** (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Italy), in close cooperation with the national and local governments, **18 evidenced-based and sustainable models of services** and interventions for children from disadvantaged backgrounds are being implemented and tested for replicability. The services are integrated and coordinated across multiple sectors, while also being mainstreamed into local and national service provision systems. These models of services are built on robust theories of change.

The interventions build on existing subnational responses, in order to leverage what is already working and in place and are supported by capacity-building, systems strengthening, and community mobilisation measures, as needed. These models ultimately aim to inform how children at risk and affected by poverty and social exclusion can be reached and linked to key European Child Guarantee services.

Effective engagement with regional and local government and other stakeholders has been established in all 4 countries, including through agreements and **sub-national multi-sector coordination structures** which oversee and monitor the planning and implementation of the models of services and interventions.

Figure shows the key results for the first year of implementation of the Phase III of the European Child Guarantee





© UNICEF

BULGARIA



4 Interventions

- Home Visiting
- Early Childhood Intervention Services
- Inclusive pre-school education services
- Outreach child and family-centered preventive and support services

3 target groups

- Children with disabilities;
- Children in precarious family situations
- Children with a minority racial or ethnic background (particularly Roma)

3 Districts

- Burgas
- Sliven
- Stara Zagora
- 10 Municipalities

In **Bulgaria** the interventions in the framework of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee aim to improve the living conditions and increase access and use of integrated services for children with disabilities and children in precarious family situations- including children in poor households and extremely poor households and Roma children- through the testing and scaling up of 4 innovative models in three districts of the country.

Home visiting program

What: Home visiting service and the provision of individualized guidance, information and support for caregivers of children 0-3 years old and pregnant women, with a particular focus on families in precarious situations and children with disabilities. Support is tailored to the specific needs of families and children and includes referral to other services (social, educational and health).

Where: All four municipalities Sliven district: Sliven, Nova Zagora, Kotel and Tvarditsa

Progress

- **3,042 families with 3,606 young children** (0-3 years) in Sliven district have received individual counselling for the provision of nurturing care to their children through more than **12,663 home visits**, conducted by the Centre for Child and Maternal Health. Of them 553 families with 781 children received intensive support
- **691 pregnant women** provided with access to pre-natal care, including **398 pregnant women** in vulnerable situations or without health insurance
- **340 children (9 months)** and **395 children (18 months)** provided with health screening
- **17 home visiting staff** have been capacitated on monitoring child development and screening/early identification of developmental difficulties.

Early childhood interventions

What: Early childhood intervention (ECI) services for families with young children with disabilities and developmental difficulties. This model ensures families with young children with developmental difficulties and disabilities, receive timely and quality family-centred support through integrated ECI services in three pilot municipalities where specialists from health, education and social services work together in a systemic way.

Where: 3 municipalities: Chirpan, Sliven and Stara Zagora

Progress

- **9 additional specialists** hired in 3 ECI services and **3 outreach teams** established.
- **31 staff** of the ECI services in 3 districts have completed an intensive and comprehensive introductory training programme.
- **20 health specialists** have participated in training webinar on "Early manifestations of childhood developmental disorders with a focus on psychomotor development, organized by the Bulgarian Pediatric Association
- **99 medical staff have completed training webinars on ECI**
- **23 parents** have participated in a webinar on Early Childhood Intervention
- **109 families** have been reached by the ECI teams, of which **29 families** receive intensive support

Early Childhood Development

What: 30 pilot kindergartens will provide **quality inclusive pre-school education services** for children with disabilities and learning difficulties. The capacities of 30 pilot kindergartens in 10 municipalities have been strengthened to provide quality inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities and special learning needs, and to engage effectively with parents through training of pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff and through the hiring of additional specialists

Where: 10 pilot municipalities in Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora districts.

Progress

- **6,152 children** receiving inclusive pre-school education.
- **44 additional specialists** from various disciplines have been hired to support the kindergartens.
- **489 teachers and specialists in kindergartens** participated in specialised training modules **65 staff** from 3 Regional Centres for Supporting the Process of Inclusive Education participated in trainings.
- **315 staff** from pilot kindergartens received methodological support.

Integrated child protection and family support

What: Ensure that children in precarious family situations and their families have access to **integrated child and family-centered support services** that address their specific vulnerabilities and prevent child-family separation. This intervention aims to improve the quality and strengthen the prevention capacities of existing family support social services by establishing mobile teams for outreach support to children and families in precarious situations with a focus on marginalized Roma communities in 7 pilot municipalities

Where: 7 municipalities in three pilot districts Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora

Progress:

- **1,638 vulnerable children** and **1,223 parents/ caregivers** mapped and provided with tailored support. Of them **245 children and 161 parents/caregivers** received intensive support
- **323 children and 313 parents/caregivers** provided with facilitated access to services as follows:
 - **111 children and 4 parents** with access to education services;
 - **92 children and 61 parents** with access to health services;
 - **63 children and 80 parents** with access to social services;
 - **6 children and 57 parents** with access to social benefits;
 - **76 parents** with access to employment services;
 - **51 children and 35 parents** with access to other services (housing, legal, administrative etc.)
 - **22 newly hired professionals and 34 professionals** from the existing teams in the social services trained in outreach work.
 - **11 additional social workers** hired in Child Protection Departments and trained

Local level Coordination

3 District Coordination & Monitoring Committees have been established in the 3 Districts where the models of services are being piloted. These are chaired by the respective District Governors and include representatives of key regional structures of the line ministries and agencies. In addition, **7 Municipal Coordination & Monitoring Committees** have been officially established and are chaired by the respective Mayors of the pilot municipalities and include representatives of UNICEF, service providers, health and educational institutions, child protection departments, social assistance departments, and local NGOs. In two smaller municipalities –where only one model of intervention is implemented (provision of inclusive pre-school education) – lighter coordination mechanisms have been established through the convening of regular working meetings by the Mayor with the participation of all stakeholders involved.

BULGARIA

Bringing basic services to Roma communities: How mobile teams support disadvantaged children in accessing health and education services



Maria-Magdalena is from the town of Sredets, in the Burgas Region of Bulgaria. In the spring of 2021 this seven-year-old girl went outside her home and the small garden in front of it for the first time in her life- she and her mother were accompanied to the city center to visit a medical specialist. This was also the first medical examination in her young life. In September 2021, she was enrolled in first grade at school, and she is making good progress and a lot of new friends.

Maria-Magdalena is among the more than 1,600 children who have

received support from the mobile teams working with vulnerable communities, established under the EU Child Guarantee Pilot Project in Bulgaria. Since the early spring of 2021, she and her family have been receiving support and counselling from the new mobile team at the Community Support Centre in Sredets.

Maria-Magdalena had never been to the doctor before the mobile team came and met with her family. When the professionals arrived at her home they realised that she has had a physical problem since birth. Elena, the social worker at the mobile team, noted that her parents were so worried they would not let her attend kindergarten out of fear of ridicule and because of her health issue, not knowing exactly what was wrong at their child. For the same reasons Maria-Magdalena was not able to play with other children in the neighborhood.

With the help of the team, she was examined by specialized doctors in Burgas, and for the first time her parents learned that her health issue was due to the absence of a major muscle in the chest (pectoralis major). Doctors assured the family that this issue should not prevent their child from engaging in everyday activities, going to school or playing with friends and they provided medical guidance on the specific care needed to improve her condition.

Her parents then decided to enroll their daughter in school but were faced with another challenge – she was not properly prepared for first grade as she had never been to kindergarten.

‘Therefore, we came up with a special programme for school readiness and we invited all children and families we work with to take part if they wanted. [‘Several children benefitted from the programme, and not only first-graders’](#), shared Elena, social worker at the Center for community support in the town of Sredets. The team is also helping other children catch up in school due to missed classes and the online learning.

Thanks to the support of social workers Maria-Magdalena is now a first grader. [‘She is so smart and curious; she touched our hearts from the very first moment we saw her smile and curiosity; she’s has so much potential. I am sure she will manage well, and we will stay by her.’](#) shares Elena.



© DSOLDO UNICEF

CROATIA



3 Interventions

Integrated child protection and family support services
 Early Childhood Intervention Services
 Access to quality pre-primary education

3 target groups

Children with disabilities;
 Children in precarious family situations
 Children with a minority racial or ethnic background (particularly Roma)

1 Districts

Medjimurje
 --> 7 Municipalities

In Croatia the specific interventions in the framework of Phase III of the Child Guarantee pay particular attention to early identification of boys and girls, and their families who live in particularly deprived environments, face specific disadvantages and for which early intervention is crucial to break the cycle of disadvantage and provide them with opportunities for developing at their maximum potential. These models of services aim to improve the living conditions and increase access and use of integrated services for children living in precarious situations such as families living in poor households, Roma children and families and children with disabilities in the Medjimurje County in Croatia.

Child protection and family-support services

What: Integrated child protection and family support services. This model of service is directed towards the early identification of girls, boys and their families who live in precarious and deprived environments and promotes accessible, high-quality, timely and appropriate family support and child protection interventions, that include outreach services in communities at the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Where: Medjimurje County

Progress:

- **389 children** benefitted from the family support programmes and the play and creative activities
- **627 parents** acquired new parenting knowledge and skills, through parenting support programmes, counselling and other programmes.
- **55 professionals and 21 Roma cultural mediators** acquired knowledge and skills to conduct parenting support programmes (32 educational professionals acquired knowledge and skills to conduct universal parenting, 7 for the parenting programme for parents of children with disabilities and 16 educational professionals and 21 Roma cultural mediators trained to conduct the new parenting support programme aimed at the needs of Roma families).
- **66 professionals from centres for social welfare** acquired new knowledge and skills on multicultural perspective in social work, from which additionally **8 management staff** acquired new knowledge and skills on leadership and management, **16 professionals** participated in training on personal and professional change by addressing and overcoming their own stereotypes and **15 professionals are learning Bayash language**
- **30 family outreach workers** acquired new knowledge and skills on effective family interventions
- **25 professionals from social welfare, health, education, the justice system, police and local community** acquired new knowledge and skills on cross-sectoral cooperation and a cross sectoral team has been established to ensure integrated service provision in the first of 7 municipalities.

Quality pre-primary education

What: All vulnerable children (including Roma, children with disabilities and children living in precarious family situations) have effective access to **quality pre-primary education** to prevent social exclusion and early school-drop out. This includes strengthening capacities of pre-primary education professionals and parents, establishment of new facilities, and development of a regulatory framework for local government.

Where: Medjimurje County

Progress:

- **2 new Play Hubs** (in Kursanec and Mala Subotica) have been equipped with toys, furniture and learning tools. The Play Hub in Kursanec re-opened on March 3. The Play Hub in Mala subotica re-opened on March 29. The Play Hub in Orehovica has been open throughout the pandemic, supporting children and families in the numbers that the changing COVID measures allowed.
- Over **300 of the most educationally-at-risk children and their families** have been reached through the 3 Play Hubs.
- Each Play Hub is open to the nearby school to organise activities that bring together Croatian and Roma children. **3 Roma facilitators and 3 professional educators** have been employed in the 3 Play Hubs.
- **74 teachers from 6 kindergartens and 3 teachers from 3 schools** have participated in trainings for leading personal and professional change by addressing and overcoming their own stereotypes, on teaching methods that combine emotions, group and social belonging, on diversity, and on building professional communities of practice for sharing and growing inclusive values.
- A costing tool has been developed and tested with selected Medjimurje municipalities and kindergartens with the aim to have a better grasp on funds necessary to involve all children in kindergarten.

Early childhood interventions

What: Young children (0-7) with or at risk of developmental delays and those with disabilities and their families have improved access to integrated and coordinated **early childhood interventions (ECI) services** that timely and adequately address their developmental needs. This includes provision of coordinated and integrated quality early childhood intervention services, strengthened knowledge and skills of health, education and social protection professionals, parenting support and improved data collection.

Where: Medjimirje County

Progress:

- **538 children and 415 caregivers/parents** have been reached by the ECI teams, of which 257 children receive intensive support
- An ECD/ECI **outreach team provided 1.614 services/counseling to the caregivers/parents** related to health, nutrition, and early childhood development
- An integrated Action Plan for ECI in Medjimirje County has been developed based on the mapping and analysis of the ECI services for young children.
- An online learning platform for health care professionals: Developmental delays in young children - early detection and support, with 7 self-paced Modules, in place and functional (<http://online.akademija-rr.hr/>).
- **44 professionals have increased capacities** for inter-sectoral cooperation in delivering ECD/ECI programmes and how to change by addressing and overcoming their own stereotypes.

Local level Coordination

Coordination:

The Programme Implementation Committee for Medjimirje County has been established and has met in person three times (in February, May and November 2021). It is chaired by the Prefect of the county and consists of 12 members, including representatives of the relevant municipalities, the Roma Council, and the County. The role and key responsibilities of the County Committee are to ensure effective programme implementation and monitoring, identifying and presenting potential adjustments during the implementation, reviewing data collected, generating evidence and lessons learned at the county level, and ensuring their integration in regional policies and programmes, but also in identifying and implementing long-term sustainability mechanisms at local level for the period after the finalization of the 2-year testing phase of the programme.

CROATIA

Access to early childhood interventions ensures Dorotea's development: Mobile outreach teams visit Roma settlements to support the developmental potential of the most vulnerable children



Two-year-old Dorotea's developmental growth has been supported by a multidisciplinary team of professionals. Zvezdana and Marko Oršuš knew that their youngest daughter, Dorotea, soon to be two-years-old had some developmental disabilities, but they were not aware of the full extent of the risks nor did they know who to contact to make sure their daughter could receive adequate healthcare and continue to develop properly. Over the last six months, a multidisciplinary team of experts gathered as part of the pilot programme Phase III: "Testing the Child Guarantee in Croatia" helped them with this.

The paediatrician met the family during her regular outreach visit to the Roma settlement of Kuršanec in Čakovec together with the Médecins du Monde outreach expert team. The team is composed of early intervention professionals, a psychologist, a gynaecologist, a paediatrician and Roma cultural mediators, who work to help those in need overcome language barriers and reach more families.

Since early intervention is the best start and an invaluable investment into the life of children with developmental risks, experts will continue to provide support to Dorotea and Zvezdana.

"We look at Dorotea through a multidisciplinary approach, from all aspects, because children are not simple and we are searching for the best approach to help her. The biggest value of this programme is the ability to identify disabilities in children from the earliest possible age because early intervention provides the best results in all areas," said the paediatrician.

Experts also help Dorotea's parents, who cannot hear, with translation into sign language. This is especially helpful to these young parents, who have had problems so far, as they shared, when communicating with doctors and experts.

[Link to the story](#)



© UNICEF

GREECE



5 Interventions

- De-institutionalisation
- Foster care
- Supported independent living
- Skills development
- Inclusive education

4 target groups

- Children with disabilities
- Children in precarious family situations
- Children and young people in migration
- Children in institutions/alternative care

1 Region

Attica Region

In Greece the interventions in the framework of Phase III of the Child Guarantee pay particular attention to the needs of children without parental care, including non-Greek migrant children and aim to build solid evidence, practice and an operational base to inform the national deinstitutionalisation reform which takes stock of the best practices developed by UNICEF and its partners in the framework of the migrant response in Greece. The other two models of service address skills building for young people and inclusive school education.

Deinstitutionalisation

What: Support national authorities to develop a clear national deinstitutionalisation strategy and support the local authorities in the region of Attica to facilitate deinstitutionalisation and identify alternative care options for vulnerable children. Strengthening a gatekeeping system and the capacities of the social workforce are key elements of this approach.

Where: National / Attica region

Progress:

- Through the partnership with **5 residential care institutions**, including 3 public and 2 private ones, working on the DI process and developing a transformational plan for each institution
- Standardised procedures for the **prevention of family separation** and provision of family support services have been developed
- The curriculum for the **capacity building of social workers** and other relevant personnel of community social services has been developed. **234 social workers from 49 municipalities** in Attica region have been trained. Due to continuous requests for training participation, ICH will repeat trainings.
- **36 frontline professionals (institutions) have been trained** on adapting the new model of work for alternative care model
- **A total of 128 children have been supported under DI model of services**, including: **28 children living in residential institution** had individual DI plans developed. **100 children have been supported** through the intervention in the municipal social services, in more than 22 municipalities in Attika region.
- UNICEF provided feedback on MoLSA draft Ministerial Decision setting the minimum standards for private children residential institutions.

Foster care

What: Support for the development of the **National Foster Care System**. This intervention aims to enable an effective national foster care operational framework through the evaluation, training and support of potential and registered foster families in all stages of foster care. In addition, this intervention aims to pilot foster care programs in the Region of Attica with a view to scale them up nationally.

Where: Attica region

Progress:

- Work for the development of **Specific protocols and tools** with the participation of key authorities (sub- working group), final drafts are expected end of April.
- **20 professionals have been capacitated** in 5 childcare institutions: a) assessment of training needs and development of training plans b) ongoing on-the-job training c) drafting relevant methodology protocols and guidelines.
- A total of **97 children** have benefited from the foster care model, **18 children** have been supported for placement in foster care, with a total of **86 foster carers and 22 prospective foster carers**.
- Aiming to raise awareness around foster care and ensure visibility across many channels the national campaign on foster care is still public, with a total Media Reach of more than 6M. Furthermore, we also utilized the foster care campaign's Brand Ambassadors to further spread the campaign's key messages.
- In collaboration with MoLSA, supporting the development of Secondary legislation for the Professional Foster Care Model, introduced in child protection care system for the first time

Supported independent living

What: Supported Independent Living (SIL) is integrated as a standard alternative care modality of the national child protection system. This includes an evaluation of the SIL model as it was developed and implemented for Unaccompanied Children, integration in the national regulatory framework to expand the service and integrate into the national childcare system and piloting in the selected region.

Where: Attica region

Progress:

- **13 Focus Group discussions** with professionals and children and young adults in institutions as well as 5 key informant interviews were undertaken to inform the **SOPs and operational framework of the SIL model of care**.
- An analysis report of the Focus Group Discussions and key informant interviews has been drafted by IRC and shared with Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to ensure the feedback of children and youth and professionals working in the field will also be considered and reflected in the JMD.
- A Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD) for the operation of SIL national project was drafted in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. A set of methodologies has been developed and is being reviewed by the Ministry to be annexed to the JMD. This includes: Internal Rules Regulation, Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct, Individual Care Plan and referral form for SIL, to be annexed to the JMD.
- Individual assessments for the SIL eligibility of three young adult girls have been completed
- One SIL apartment has been identified and procurement procedures for the purchase of the apartments' equipment have been initiated.
- Recruitment process has been initiated

Integrated skills development

What: Access to skills development and opportunities for social and economic inclusion of young people. The purpose is to develop a model on skills development, supporting adolescents and young people in challenging living conditions, to benefit from better employment or entrepreneurship opportunities and become engaged members of civil society.

Where: Attica region

Progress:

- A total of **887 children and young persons (16 – 24 years old)** have benefited from model 4 services of enhancing life skills, job readiness and transition to adulthood, including:
- **84 young people have completed interviews** to outline their profile around their skills, educational background, professional experience and prospects.
- **64 young people with a refugee or migrant background developed foundational, transferrable and vocational skills**, through a 250 hrs training Programme for Intercultural Mediators
- **20 young people with disabilities or in institutional care participated in a training** Programme promoting Social Entrepreneurship.
- A draft version of a web-based portfolio for skills assessment and job matching has been developed, and adjustments are on-going.
- A labour market feasibility study accompanied by a bottleneck analysis for marginalized adolescents and youth – with a focus on Attika region has been completed, presented in the technical Working Group and validated.
- **803 adolescents and young people benefitted from job orientation programmes**, developed entrepreneurship skills or gained first-hand experience in real world employment settings.
- **28 young people applied for a job experience acquisition** (internship) programme.
- **17 enterprises and 37 mentors were engaged in programmes** for customized pathways towards innovation and entrepreneurship and job shadow.

Inclusive education

What: Schools become more inclusive, ensuring quality education for all children, including those with disabilities in families or in institutional care and migrant children. This includes a teacher capacity building programme, piloting the intervention in Attica region and a sensitisation campaign on the power and benefits of inclusive education.

Where: Attica region

Progress:

- The bottleneck analysis on the implementation of an inclusive school in Greece has been finalized, presented and validated by a technical Working Group.
- The campaign on inclusive schools, focused on the inclusion of children with disabilities was finalized and made public on 30th of September.
- A **total of 315 teachers, school principals, administrative staff** and KESY (Center for Educational and Counselling Support) staff have improved their knowledge and skills on inclusive education (including children with disabilities, refugee and migrant children, Roma children)
- **22 members** of the Centers for Educational and Counselling Support, social scientists and school psychologists participated in workshops and training sessions on inclusive education.
- A total of **99 children were supported** through the development of their individualized learning path as a model for inclusion.
- **30 schools** received regular and systematic support to implement inclusive practices, setting and action plan and research protocol.

Coordination

The **National Child Guarantee Steering Committee** (Co- chaired with MoLSA) includes both representatives of the central government as well as of local authorities and has met once. The Committee is complemented by technical groups aiming to inform the implementation of the models of services and results areas.

GREECE: Inclusive Education Campaign



In May 2021, UNICEF Greece launched an inclusive education campaign in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Ministry of Education and Religions, to raise awareness around the importance of promoting inclusive schools and providing equal opportunities to all children regardless of circumstances, as part of Phase III EU Child Guarantee Programme.

One of the champions of this campaign is 10 year old Panagiotis, whose story was launched on International Day of Persons with Disabilities (Dec 3). Panagiotis is a 10 year old boy who lives in Athens with his family and suffers from spinal muscular atrophy type 2 due to the lack of a particular gene. He was born with this incurable condition and is not able to move and walk.

In the [video-story](#), Panagiotis talks to UNICEF about his everyday life, the challenges he faces as a person with a disability in Greece explaining why it is important for all people to have equal rights.

"If I had a magic wand, I would like to see ramps, elevators, because we are humans too..."

This is what Panagiotis wishes for it's very difficult for him to visit places that every child at his age so the phrase should be playgrounds and amusement parks- due to the lack of infrastructure.

Through this video Panagiotis urges Greek society to build new parks that are accessible by children with disabilities because as he says *"people around the world should not be treated differently. They are all humans after all. And they should all have equal rights."*

This young advocate's statement has driven major social media engagement (especially on Instagram) and went viral with 357.6K video views, over 809K overall Reach, 1,2M Impressions and 18.7K Engagements – mostly organic – while increasing UNICEF Greece followers by over 1K within a day. Given the story's impact, it was further shared with a wider European audience on UNICEF Regional Office social channels and website.

Since then, Panagiotis has received many media inquiries, acting as UNICEF's advocate for topics related to inclusion. He will participate in a documentary of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) aiming to promote youth perspectives, which will showcase children's voices across Europe.



© UNICEF

ITALY



5 Interventions

- Mainstreamed foster care
- Social housing and skills building for care leavers
- Integrated skills development
- Innovative family support service
- Contrasting educational poverty

5 target groups

- Children and young people in migration
- Children with disabilities
- Children in institutions/alternative care
- Children in precarious family situations
- Children with mental health issues

7 regions

- Sicily
- Lombardy
- Latium
- Veneto
- Emiglia Romagna
- Tuscany
- Campania
- (others being defined)

In Italy, the intervention in the framework of Phase III of the Child Guarantee aims to address the needs of children affected by migration and those without parental care, as well as children in precarious family situations, children with disabilities and children with mental health issues.

Foster care

What: Foster care mainstreamed in the childcare system. This intervention aims to map and document promising practices in the provision of alternative care for out-of-home children, including specialized foster care practices, and design, test and integrate into the mainstream childcare system a model of foster care for unaccompanied and separated migrant children and accompanied children with migration background whose families are in need of a temporary support through foster care. Additionally, the capacity of frontline workers (psychologists, social workers, pedagogists and professional educators) to accompany adolescents in alternative care in their transition to adulthood will be strengthened.

Where: Sicily, Latium, Lombardy and Veneto and other locations to be defined

Progress:

- **48 migrant children** have been placed in foster care and, together with the foster families, are receiving quality support and monitoring.
- **362 foster families/individuals** and social workers trained on foster care system.
- **1,361 potential foster families/ individuals** reached with awareness campaigns.
- **Partnership Agreement** signed with the University of Padua for the analysis of good practices of foster care, currently ongoing.

Agreements with the National Councils of different professional clusters (psychologists, social workers, pedagogists and professional educators) for the development, delivery and sustainability of a training programme for frontline workers.

Integrated skills development

What: An **integrated skills development** package aims to improve young people's employability and social inclusion and ensure their effective transition to adulthood. UNICEF's flagship initiative UPSHIFT aims to empower marginalized adolescents to become social innovators. Innovation & Creativity Camps aim to generate ideas from adolescents on how to address community problems. Students are then supported through in-depth programmes delivered by trained teachers: a 20-hour programme and an 80-hour incubation phase during the following school year.

Where: Sicily, Latium and Lombardy

Progress:

- Since 2020, the UPSHIFT skills building programme was piloted in **15 upper secondary schools** selected to reach the most disadvantaged children in Lombardy, Latium and Sicily.
- **2.612 students** were involved in 24 "Innovation & Creativity Camps". A total of 264 **ideas** with social impact were created by the students.
- **94 teachers** were trained on UPSHIFT XXI century skills building programme.

In the 2020-21 school year, a total of **659 students** completed the entire skills building programme, resulting in 2 final events (Demo Days) in each location. Following the incubation phase in Palermo, a winning team of 4 students was selected for a (post-UPSHIFT) mentorship programme with a local business incubator.

- Over **500 students, 30 teachers and 120 mentors** demonstrated an increase of their XXI-century skills through self-assessment surveys.

Social housing and skills building for care leavers

What: Integration of **social housing and skills building components into the National Care Leavers Programme**, led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The intervention aims at complementing the already existing individualized support to care leavers to further support them in their school-to-work transition and housing autonomy. The intervention includes a mapping of good practices, support to local social services, capacity building activities and potentially direct support to care leavers.

Where: Sicily, Latium, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Campania

Progress:

- **Municipalities of intervention** were agreed upon with MoLSP.
- **Mapping of good practices** of social housing was developed and validated with MoLSP
- **55 tutors and social workers** involved in the National Care Leavers Programme received the training on the XXI-century skills building for the transition of care leavers to the labour market and to autonomy and adulthood.
- **15 care leavers** participated in an online skills-building activity (UPSHIFT Innovation & Creativity Camp), where they were supported by mentors in the analysis of challenges related to their transition to autonomy and in the creation of innovative solutions.

Innovative family support service

What: **Peer support for vulnerable families, including families with children with disabilities.** The intervention includes mapping of services already offered by the Family Support Centres, focusing on promising peer-to-peer support between families, the development of a standardized methodology, followed by a testing in three selected Centres of a model for family peer support s, which will include staff training and supervision.

Where: Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Latium, Marche and Apulia

Progress:

- **An initial scoping phase** has been conducted, **6 Family Support Centres** has been selected for the implementation of the pilot
- **A mapping of peer support activities** implemented in Italy has been conducted and validated with the Department for Family Policies

Contrasting educational poverty

What: **Interventions to effectively counter educational poverty.** The aim of the intervention is to monitor and document the most promising practices financed by the Department for Family Policies (through the Educare call for proposals), present them in a structured way and analyse their replicability and potential scale-up and inclusion in the ECG NAP.

Where: Veneto, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Latium, Campania

Progress:

- **Research protocol and data collection tools** have been developed and validated with the relevant institutional counterpart (Department for Family Policies)
- **The nine most promising practices** to counter educational poverty financed through the Educare call for proposal have been selected and the monitoring and documentation process has started.

The operational research is being carried out in the 4 Countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Italy) which are implementing specific models of services to address the needs of the most disadvantaged children. The operational research aims to build evidence on 'how things work' (planning, management, integration, sustainability, replicability, service delivery, inclusion and participation) in different contexts, generating generalizable evidence on the practicalities of implementing effective and efficient integrated services for children affected by poverty and social exclusion in Europe. The research is based on a standardized research approach across the 4 countries, on theories of change that were developed for each of the 18 models of services and interventions, and on a mapping of implementation plans and contexts. The first wave of data collection has been completed. More than 80 interviews with key stakeholders have been conducted and data analysis is advancing. Preparations for the second wave are underway and data collection will start in September 2022.

Operational research:
"Building evidence on 'how things work' in different contexts for the 4 vulnerable groups of children, generating generalizable evidence and feeding this back directly to practitioners."



Child and Adolescent Participation

Child participation is essential for reaching the most disadvantaged groups of children and is being integrated into all pillars of the Phase III. The “[Guidance on Child and Adolescent Participation as part of Phase III of the Preparatory Action for the ECG](#)” was drafted by UNICEF to provide a simple and synthesized guidance on how to mainstream child and adolescent participation in planning, design and monitoring and evaluation of the different activities while at the same time documenting the work that is being advanced in each of the pilot countries. The document is directed to the UNICEF Country teams as well as implementing and governmental partners involved in the implementation of the Phase III of the preparatory action of the pilot European Child Guarantee project.

Based on this guidance, child and adolescent participation has been mainstreamed in the different activities of the Phase III of the preparatory action for the ECG: in evidence generation, policy/decision making and service design and delivery, monitoring and evaluation as well as in advocacy and communication.

To present work being done on “[Child and Adolescent Participation in Phase III of the Preparatory Action for a Child Guarantee](#)”, UNICEF ECARO together with the European Commission (DG EMPL) organised a webinar to share practices and experiences from the 7 pilot countries of Phase III of the ECG, (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Germany, Lithuania, Italy and Spain). The aim of the webinar was to share practical examples of how child and adolescent participation is being embedded into the processes related to the development, implementation and monitoring of the Child Guarantee national action plans.

Below are some of the highlights of the practices and interventions that are being piloted in 5 countries:

Bulgaria

Child participation in Bulgaria is focused on evidence generation through **child-led research** and through **U-Report consultations** with young people informing policy making related to the development of the ECG NAP. The child participation activities are implemented by UNICEF and the National Network for Children. The child-led research focuses on specific barriers faced by the target groups of vulnerable children in accessing key services to be covered by the ECG – health, education, healthy nutrition, and decent housing. The purpose is to build the skills of selected groups of children and adolescents to conduct their own research in their communities and among their peers on a specific priority issue, which they identify, to share their views and perspectives, and to offer creative ideas and solutions.

The results and recommendations were presented by the 3 teams at a special panel during the annual meeting of the National Network for Children, held in August 2021. The research teams participated in a public event “Making the European Child Guarantee a Reality for Children in Bulgaria: The Voices of Youth”, organized by UNICEF and the European Commission Representation in Bulgaria under the auspices of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labour and Social Policy. The child-led research projects were presented through short videos and widely shared through social media. During the event the adolescents discussed their ideas and recommendations for the implementation of the ECG in Bulgaria with the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, the ECG National Coordinator, the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection and other members of the National Steering Committee for the CG pilot project.

In addition to the above, three national polls on access to healthcare, education and adequate nutrition were conducted through U-Report among 200+ young people in May 2021, August 2021 and November 2021. The data collected was analyzed and presented in special reports, which were published and shared through social media. The key results were also used by the research team who conducted the Deep Dive analysis of the national child poverty reduction policies, programmes, and mechanisms in Bulgaria.

Croatia

UNICEF Croatia in cooperation with partners and the government is using **UPSHIFT**, a youth social innovation and social entrepreneurship programme, designed to build skills and opportunities for young people who face social and economic disadvantages. The programme combines social innovation workshops, mentorship, incubation and seed funding, to equip young people with the skills and resources they need to identify problems in their own communities and design solutions for them. While young people build skills for life, employment and social entrepreneurship through UPSHIFT, their wider communities benefit from the solutions they create. UPSHIFT in Medjmurje County promoted meaningful participation of Roma youth through empowerment, cooperation and trust. by building cooperation and trust between stakeholders, Roma and non-Roma communities.

The Croatian Association of Social Workers and UNICEF have worked closely to incorporate the voice of children at risk in the **design and provision of integrated child protection services** in multi-cultural communities, in particular Roma settlements. The objective is to improve access to integrated child and family protection services, including early identification, referrals, effective case management and cross-sectoral cooperation and ensure they are adapted to the inter-cultural

environment (including for Roma population). Focus groups discussions have been held for children together with professionals from Social Welfare Centres and parents, have been informing the work methodology with children and families at risk as well as the provision of social services and other forms of assistance. Children are also actively participating in the implementation of interventions by sharing their opinions, problems, expectations and wishes and defining special activities in cooperation with family outreach workers and in accordance with their capabilities.

Greece

In Greece, A **Youth Steering Committee (YSC)** has been established and meets regularly, involving children as part of the processes of decision-making at local level. The members of the YSC represent different disadvantaged groups, such as Roma community, persons with disabilities, those refugee/migrant backgrounds, with institutional, experience, with foster care and supported independent living experiences. In cooperation with the National Coordinator, UNICEF engages the members of the YSC for the development of the ECG national action plan at a national scale.

Children and young people have been engaged in designing a Supported Independent Living model of care for children 15 years and above, currently living in childcare institutions. UNICEF Greece works to ensure meaningful participation of children living in institutions in the design of the model for SIL, given that they will be the future beneficiaries for SIL. Children and young people have been consulted through focus group discussions organized by UNICEF and International Rescue Committee Hellas.

Italy

The **Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** was established, in collaboration with the government-led ECG Steering Committee: the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Department of Family of the Council of Ministers. The YAB is in line with the Government of Italy's recently published National Guidelines for Child Participation drafted by the Intergroup for participation of the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence and UNICEF's Guidance on Child and Adolescent Participation in the Child Guarantee, both of which are based on the EU Child Rights Strategy adopted by the European Commission in March 2021. Through the establishment of the YAB, UNICEF has created the space for children and young people to be meaningfully involved and participate in the process of development of the ECG NAP, thereby ensuring children's and young people's participation is adequately reflected in all of its stages, from planning to design and delivery of services to monitoring and evaluation at both national and local levels.

The ECG YAB membership in Italy comprises 23 children and young people aged 14 to 21 years representing the ECG target groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including beneficiaries of the Phase III pilot models, as well as youth volunteers for UNICEF and the line ministries. Gender parity and geographical representativity were additional criteria used in the outreach phase carried out jointly by UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Department of Family.

As part of the child participation interventions in Italy, the **UPSHIFT** model gives disadvantaged adolescents a voice and provides spaces to enable their active involvement in the definition and understanding of their needs, challenges, and concerns and in the identification of innovative solutions to the challenges that affect them and their communities. When adolescent's views are communicated to policy and

decision-makers and these views are taken seriously and acted upon, adolescent-led solutions created through UPSHIFT can feed into policy making at national as well as decision-making at local level.

Adolescent participation in UPSHIFT has a three-fold purpose: 1) Adolescent participation as a standalone specific objective, aiming to enhance their active citizenship and personal empowerment, by providing them with voice and space to share their ideas and propose social impact solutions at local level; 2) Adolescent participation as part of service design and implementation, aiming to involve them in defining their concerns and the challenges they aim to solve, contributing to ensure the content is tailor-made to their specific needs, profiles, and backgrounds; and 3) Adolescent participation as a means to influence national policy formulation and local decision-making processes to combat social exclusion.

Over 1.700 adolescents participated in Innovation & Creativity Camps within schools. As part of the monitoring and evaluation activities, around 530 adolescents, 30 teachers and 120 mentors responded to self-assessment surveys, reporting an increase of their participation and 21st century skill building. Among the next steps of UPSHIFT piloting is the promotion of adolescent-led solutions identified through UPSHIFT to influence local decision-making processes.

Spain

UNICEF Spain has closely collaborated with the High Commissioner for the Fight against Child Poverty and the Secretary of State for Social Rights through the Directorate General for the Rights of Children and Adolescents to take children's views and opinions into account in the Deep Dive process. The University of Alcalá, together with UNICEF, drafted a child-friendly document entitled "We need your help to design the European child guarantee," to ensure the ECG is understood by children and young people. UNICEF Spain has also been working with government partners to support the creation of a State Council for the Participation of Children and Adolescents, which includes the participation of 34 children aged 8 to 17 years old in disadvantaged situations as part of its decision-making processes.

Conference: “European Child Guarantee: A Unique Opportunity for the Social Inclusion of Roma Children,”

To present the work done around improving outcomes for Roma children in Phase III of the Preparatory Action for a Child Guarantee”, on 21 February 2022, UNICEF ECARO together with the European Commission (DG EMPL) organised a conference entitled, **“European Child Guarantee: A Unique Opportunity for the Social Inclusion of Roma Children,”** in coordination with the French Presidency of the Council of European Union. The aim of the event was to share practices and experiences from the 7 pilot countries of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Germany, Lithuania, Italy and Spain) in order to inform the development and implementation of the NAPs in all EU Members states. Presentations from France, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovakia and Sweden provided some concrete perspectives for improving outcomes for Roma children to inform and inspire national action plan development. The event was opened by **Mr. Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, **Ms. Virginie Lasserre**, Director General of Social Cohesion, Ministry of Solidarity and Health, **Mr. Philippe Cori**, UNICEF Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia with a video message from **Ms. Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová**, Member of the European Parliament National Strategy for the integration of Roma. Closing remarks were provided by **Ms. Katarina Ivanković-Knežević**, Director for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, DG EMPL, European Commission. The ECG presents a new opportunity for Europe, as an approach driven by framework focused on the rights and needs of the most disadvantaged children in an integrated way. Addressing the multiple disadvantages faced by Roma children and other similar disadvantaged groups of children, requires evidence-based, innovative approaches in service delivery that cut across sectors, looking at the needs and rights of children in a holistic way to ensure policies are effective in supporting Roma inclusion.

The conference was organized in the framework of the Exchange Platform for European Child Guarantee National Coordinators. The conference series targets government partners, National Coordinators from the piloting countries and other EU Member States, implementing partners, as well as European Commission officials and UNICEF Country Offices across Europe and the Western Balkans. Full agenda and presentations are available here: [on European Child Guarantee: A unique opportunity for the social inclusion of Roma children Exchange Platform for Child Guarantee National Coordinator.](#)

Ministerial Conference of French Presidency: “Building the Europe’s future: Implementing the European Child Guarantee”

On March 4, 2022, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union held a Ministerial Conference entitled, [“Building the Europe’s future: Implementing the European Child Guarantee”](#), gathering all relevant stakeholders to discuss the multidimensional nature of combatting poverty. The conference included Representatives of the European institutions (European Commission, European Parliament) and agencies (Agency for Fundamental Rights, European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE]), civil society and NGOs (Save the Children, Eurochild and others). **Adrien Taquet**, *French Minister of State for Children and Families, on behalf of the presidency of the Council of the European Union*; **Nicolas Schmit**, *European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights*; and **David Lega**, *Co-President of the European Parliament’s Intergroup on Children’s Rights* opened the conference.

UNICEF’s Deputy Regional Director, **Philippe Cori** shared insights on national action planning processes and lessons learned from the 7 pilot countries of Phase III of the ECG. Children’s perspectives were at the heart of discussions, with a delegation of 20 children from across the European Union holding an open dialogue with ministers to share their perspectives, expectations and needs and ask questions of the ministers regarding their vision. The Ministers also shared their views in a [Declaration of the European Ministers in charge of Children, on the situation in Ukraine](#).

Technical Exchange Platform for National Coordinators Webinar: “Early Childhood Education and Care in the European Child Guarantee,”



On April 7, 2022, a webinar entitled, [“Early Childhood Education and Care in the European Child Guarantee,”](#) provided an overview of country experiences from Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy and Spain on strengthening early childhood education and care (ECEC) with a focus on the most marginalised children.

The webinar highlighted the vital role that ECEC plays in addressing poverty and social exclusion and its role in contributing to the EU Child Guarantee’s agenda. The panel discussion focused on sharing perspectives, from ECG Phase III pilot countries and Member States, regarding concrete measures on integrating and scaling up ECEC services into national action plans, as well as challenges and lessons learned from national planning processes.

Speakers acknowledged that high-quality early childhood education and care lays the foundations for long term success in life, in education, well-being, employability, and social inclusion and that the most marginalised children benefit the most from ECEC interventions and service. The event also underscored the unique opportunity that the European Child Guarantee provides to amplify the ECEC agenda and strengthen national, regional and local level ECEC provision, funding and coordination. Participants also acknowledged the impact of the Ukrainian refugee crisis across Member States and how the ECG can create pathways for integration of children into ECEC systems.

Spotlight: 1 Year Anniversary of European Child Guarantee

To mark the anniversary of the adoption by the Commission European Child Guarantee and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child on March 24, a virtual dialogue was held with the participation of Commissioner Schmit and Vice-President Šuica together with young advocates. The event included 13-year-old Deniz, youth advocate, UNICEF Bulgaria asking the leaders about how the Child Guarantee is addressing discrimination.

[Video here](#)



[Euronews' show Real Economy](#) hosted an episode highlighting the work being carried out in Phase III of the Child Guarantee to show how the pilot programme in Croatia is addressing the inclusion of Roma children, 85% of whom are at risk of poverty, compared to the 24% average across Europe. The story features the work being implemented in the Medjmurje region of Croatia to promote Roma inclusion and support positive parenting skills through a series of workshops aimed at increasing education rates and access to education for Roma children.



A **Digital Communication Snapshot of the European Child Guarantee**, highlighting key content produced from Dec 2021 – April 2022, is available for download

unicef 
for every child

**UNICEF Europe and
Central Asia Regional Office**

Palais des Nations,
CH-1211 Geneva 10,
Switzerland

Telephone: +41 22 909 5111

Contact:

ecaro@unicef.org

www.unicef.org/eca

© April 2022

The information and views set out in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.