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P9_TA(2021)0161

European Child Guarantee

European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2021 on the European Child Guarantee (2021/2605(RSP))

(2021/C 506/15)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
- having regard to the objectives established under Article 3 TEU, in particular combating social exclusion and discrimination, promoting social justice, economic, social and territorial cohesion and the protection of the rights of the child,
- having regard to the horizontal social clause in Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to social policy objectives in Articles 151 and 153 TFEU,
- having regard to the revised European Social Charter,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as referred to in Article 6 TEU,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and, in particular, to principles 1, 3, 4, 11, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, and its 2030 headline targets,
- having regard to the Commission Communication on the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (COM(2021)0142),
- having regard to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee (COM(2021)0137),
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan,
- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 10,
- having regard to International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and recommendations,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD),
- having regard to the Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines,
- having regard to the Commission's adjusted work programme for 2020 (COM(2020)0440),
- having regard to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (COM(2011)0173),
- having regard to its resolution of 21 January 2021 on access to decent and affordable housing for all ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) (COM(2018)0382),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility ⁽²⁾,

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0020.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17.

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- having regard Regulation (EU) 2020/2221 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 December 2020 amending Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 as regards additional resources and implementing arrangements to provide assistance for fostering crisis repair in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its social consequences and for preparing a green, digital and resilient recovery of the economy (REACT-EU) ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the Commission Feasibility Study on the Child Guarantee,
- having regard to written declaration 0042/2015 under Rule 136 of its Rules of Procedure on investing in children, adopted in March 2016,
- having regard to Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2021 on children's rights in view of the EU Strategy on the rights of the child ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 October 2017 on minimum income policies as a tool for fighting poverty ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 November 2015 on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences ⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2020 on a strong and social Europe for just transitions ⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989,
- having regard to the General Comments of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child ⁽⁹⁾,
- having regard to the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, as enshrined in UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/64/142 of 24 February 2010,
- having regard to the declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe of 1 February 2012 on the rise of anti-Gypsyism and racist violence against Roma in Europe,
- having regard to the Commission communications adopted with the aim of creating a Union of Equality, in line with the 'Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024', in particular its communications of 24 November 2020 entitled 'Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027' (COM(2020)0758), of 18 September 2020 entitled 'A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025' (COM(2020)0565), of 5 March 2020 entitled 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025' (COM(2020)0152), and of 12 November 2020 entitled 'Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025' (COM(2020)0698),

⁽³⁾ OJ L 437, 28.12.2020, p. 30.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0090.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 346, 27.9.2018, p. 156.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 366, 27.10.2017, p. 19.

⁽⁷⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0054.

⁽⁸⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0371.

⁽⁹⁾ In particular, General Comments No. 5 on general measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, No. 6 on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin; No. 10 on children's rights in juvenile justice, No. 12 on the right of the child to be heard, No. 13 on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, No. 14 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, No. 15 on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, and No.16 on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights.

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- having regard to its resolution of 26 November 2019 on children's rights on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ⁽¹⁰⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 February 2019 on the need for a strengthened post-2020 Strategic EU Framework for National Roma Inclusion Strategies and stepping up the fight against anti-Gypsyism ⁽¹¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 September 2020 entitled 'Implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies: combating negative attitudes towards people with Romani background in Europe' ⁽¹²⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled 'Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030' (COM(2021)0101),
 - having regard to the Joint Declaration of the EPSCO ministers entitled 'Overcoming poverty and social exclusion — mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on families — working together to develop prospects for strong children',
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 June 2020 on the European Disability Strategy post-2020 ⁽¹³⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission Recommendation entitled 'Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage (2013/112/EU)' ⁽¹⁴⁾,
 - having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU,
 - having regard to the UN policy brief of 15 April 2020 entitled 'The impact of COVID-19 on children',
 - having regard to the Commission Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market 2008/867/EC of 3 October 2008,
 - having regard to the Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market,
 - having regard to the Council Recommendation on access to social protection,
 - having regard to the new Skills Agenda,
 - having regard to the questions for oral answer to the Council and to the Commission on the European Child Guarantee (O-000025/2021 — B9-0012/2021 and O-000026/2021 — B9-0013/2021),
 - having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
- A. whereas the proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee must complement the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, both adopted on 24 March 2021; whereas the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child brings together all current and future initiatives on children's rights under one coherent policy framework, and puts forward recommendations for both internal and external EU action;

⁽¹⁰⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2019)0066.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ C 449, 23.12.2020, p. 2.

⁽¹²⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0229.

⁽¹³⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0156.

⁽¹⁴⁾ OJ L 59, 2.3.2013.

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- B. whereas child poverty has been identified by international organisations, such as the Council of Europe, and NGOs, such as UNICEF, as both a potential cause for children's rights violations and a potential outcome of those violations, through the impact it has on children's ability to exercise their rights, as and a result of the failure to uphold the aforementioned rights;
- C. whereas children growing up with a scarcity of resources and precarious family situations are more likely to experience poverty and social exclusion, with far-reaching impacts on their development and later adulthood, lack access to adequate skills and have limited employment options, propagating a vicious circle of inter-generational poverty;
- D. whereas the six categories identified in the Child Guarantee proposal are those most at risk, who need immediate concern and care; whereas the objectives of the Guarantee should be understood to apply, as much as possible, to all children in the Union;
- E. whereas the issue of child-poverty and social exclusion are pervasive problems found across all societies, best addressed by comprehensive and broad policies, narrow in application and broad in scope, targeting both children but also their families and communities, and by prioritising investments in the creation of new opportunities and solutions; whereas all sectors of society must be involved in solving these problems, from local, regional, national and European authorities to civil society and the private sector;
- F. whereas research shows that investment in children, for example in high quality early childhood education and care, can yield a return on investment at societal level at least four times higher than the original costs of the investments, without taking into account the wider benefits for businesses in terms of skilled labourers, or for welfare systems that are unburdened from further expenses for children that have access to social inclusion measures⁽¹⁵⁾; whereas budgetary procedures should recognise investment in children as a separate investment category, distinct from regular social expenditure;
- G. whereas in 2019, 22,2 % of children in the EU — almost 18 million children — were at risk of poverty or social exclusion; whereas children from low-income families, homeless children, children with a disability, children with a migrant background, children with a minority ethnic background, particularly Roma children, children in institutional care, children in precarious family situations, single-parent families, LGBTIQ+ families, and families where parents are away to work abroad face serious difficulties, such as severe housing deprivation or overcrowding, barriers in accessing fundamental and basic services, such as adequate nutrition and decent housing, which are key for their well-being and the development of social, cognitive, and emotional skills; whereas properly heated housing with safe water and sanitation, and housing in general, are key for children's health, well-being, growth and development; whereas adequate housing is also conducive to children learning and studying;
- H. whereas the number of children with disabilities is unknown due to a lack of statistics, but may be in the region of 15 % of the total number of children in the Union; whereas children with disabilities should fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children, including the right to grow up in their families or a family environment in line with their best interests as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child; whereas family members often have to reduce or stop professional activities in order to care for family members with a disability; whereas the Commission Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee (intermediate report) points out that the main barriers identified for children with disabilities are problems involving physical access, the non-adaptation of services and facilities to children's needs and, in many cases, simply the lack of availability thereof; whereas in the same study many respondents pointed to problems of discrimination, specifically in problems relating to education, and of affordability in housing;
- I. whereas children's rights cannot be upheld without the successful implementation of the UN SDGs and vice versa;
- J. whereas all children have the right to protection from poverty, which clearly means there is a need for preventive policies; whereas Parliament and European civil society have called for the creation of a Child Guarantee to ensure that

⁽¹⁵⁾ University of Pennsylvania Study on High Return on Investment (ROI): <https://www.impact.upenn.edu/early-childhood-toolkit/why-invest/what-is-the-return-on-investment/>

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each child living in poverty has effective and free access to quality and free healthcare, education, early childhood education and care, and effective access to decent housing and adequate nutrition; whereas the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has highlighted that fighting child poverty is also a matter of fundamental rights and legal obligations ⁽¹⁶⁾;

- K. whereas eradicating child poverty necessarily implies that children's parents or caregivers have access to work with rights, with decent wages and secure and stable working arrangements;
- L. whereas this proposal offers concrete guidance to Member States for guaranteeing effective and free access to education and school-based activities, early childhood education and care (ECEC), healthcare, sports, leisure and cultural activities for every child, and for those in need in particular; whereas Member States should promote policies to ensure accessible and affordable housing for children in need, and healthy nutrition, to address poverty and foster equal opportunities for all children at the national, regional and local level; whereas every child has the right to play;
- M. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion putting millions of children and families in an even more precarious socio-economic situation; whereas as a consequence of the pandemic, it is estimated that the number of children living below their respective national poverty lines could soar by as many as 117 million, and a further approximately 150 million children worldwide are living in multidimensional poverty; whereas low- and middle-income individuals and families are at a higher risk of poverty when unemployment increases; whereas they are also at higher risk of severe housing deprivation, housing insecurity, over-indebtedness, eviction and homelessness; whereas these figures are expected to grow exponentially due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic consequences, which will affect millions of children in Europe throughout their lives; whereas the COVID-19 crisis has worsened the situation of marginalised children living in overcrowded and inhuman conditions with limited access to healthcare, drinking water, sanitation and food, putting them at greater risk of contracting the virus;
- N. whereas the shift to distance learning accelerated in 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic, and thus the lack of access to an internet connection, digital tools and infrastructure have particularly excluded very young children with special needs, those living in poverty, in marginalised communities and in remote and rural areas including outlying regions and territories; whereas there has been an alarming rise in the number of children whose parents lost their accommodation or jobs, and in the number of children who were deprived of their most nutritious daily meal, as well as access of after-school services such as sports, leisure, artistic and cultural activities, which nurture their development and well-being; whereas the lack of access to digital solutions and opportunities for digital education can severely restrict later access to education and employment for young people, depriving them of better labour market opportunities, and also depriving European businesses of potential workers; whereas there is therefore a need to invest in digital education solutions; whereas digital solutions and other assistive technologies for children with disabilities can enable and accelerate the process of social inclusion and later-life access to more opportunities; whereas, therefore, equal access is key in this regard;
- O. whereas children with disabilities in the EU are disproportionately more likely to be placed in institutional care than children without disabilities, and appear far less likely to benefit from efforts to enable a transition from institutional to family-based care; whereas children with disabilities are still segregated in education by being placed in special schools, and face physical and other barriers that prevent them from benefiting from inclusive education; whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has left many children with intellectual disabilities without the possibility to carry on with their education as online education is often not suitable for their special needs;
- P. whereas the Union can play a key role in the overall fight against child poverty and social exclusion of all children, including the six key categories identified by the Commission;

⁽¹⁶⁾ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Combating child poverty: An issue of fundamental rights', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018.

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- Q. whereas children of mobile EU citizens often fall between the gaps in national legislations; whereas while labour migration reduces poverty in the short term, it leads to children being left behind, which can exacerbate their social underdevelopment and lead to precarity, with children of migrant parents who are still residing in their country of origin facing greater chances of being marginalised, mistreated and abused, which is particularly relevant for intra-EU labour mobility ⁽¹⁷⁾;
- R. whereas the Child Guarantee is one of the flagship social policy initiatives listed in Commission's political guidelines and the Commission Work Programme 2021, and must be further boosted in the future by ambitious policies and targets; whereas this issue must be on the agenda of the Conference for the Future of Europe; whereas the EPSR and the 2013 Commission Recommendation 'Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage' remain important guiding principles for reducing child poverty, improving child well-being, and providing a stable future, while reducing early school leaving; whereas in the Action Plan on implementing the EPSR the Commission has set a target of reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU by at least 15 million by 2030 — including at least 5 million children; whereas negative gender stereotypes and social conditioning leading to the so called 'dream gap' or 'entitlement gap' and a lack of women's representation in leadership positions condition girls' career and education choices from an early age, and therefore contribute to increasing inequality and gender segmentation between men and women in certain sectors of the job market, in particular science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers;
- S. whereas local and regional authorities are at the forefront of work to tackle child poverty and exploitation, and therefore have a crucial responsibility in preventing marginalisation and social exclusion; whereas national authorities should provide them with sufficient means to meet these objectives, whenever appropriate;
1. Welcomes the Commission proposal for a Council recommendation establishing the Child Guarantee, whose objective is to prevent and combat poverty and social exclusion by guaranteeing free and effective access for children in need to key services such as early childhood education and care, educational and school-based activities, healthcare and at least one healthy meal per school day, and effective access for all children in need to healthy nutrition and adequate housing; calls on the Council and the Member States to be ambitious in the full and rapid adoption of the recommendation and in its implementation; expects the input contained in this resolution to be taken into account with a view to the adoption of the Council recommendation; stresses that the Child Guarantee aims at providing public support to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing access for children in need to a set of key services, which means that Member States should either organise and provide such services or provide adequate benefits so that parents or guardians of children in need are in a position to cover the cost of these services;
 2. Welcomes the Commission communication on the EU strategy on the rights of the child and endorses its objectives of fulfilling the shared responsibility of respect for and the protection of the rights of every child, alongside a common project for healthier, resilient and fairer societies for all; acknowledges that the Commission proposal for a Council recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee complements the strategy and focuses on children in need in establishing a European enabling framework to defend children's rights and put them at the top of the EU agenda; endorses its main goal to fight child poverty and social exclusion and to promote equal, inclusive opportunities and health; strongly supports the concrete guidance given to competent national and local authorities on providing children in need with effective and free access to a set of key services, such as free, quality early childhood education and care, educational and school-based activities, and healthcare, and effective access to adequate housing and healthy nutrition, on the same footing as their peers;
 3. Calls for the EU and the Member States to tackle the structural problems causing child poverty and social exclusion by promoting a high level of employment and social inclusion, in particular among disadvantaged groups; calls on Member States to ensure the effective establishment of the European Child Guarantee across the Union by mainstreaming the guarantee across all policy sectors, and urges them to make use of existing EU policies and funds for concrete measures that contribute to eradicating child poverty and social exclusion; stresses the importance of competent authorities at national,

⁽¹⁷⁾ UNICEF Study on the impact of parental deprivation on the children left behind by Moldovan migrants http://www.childrenleftbehind.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/2008_UNICEF-CRIC-et.al._Moldova_ParentalDeprivation1.pdf

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regional and local level in guaranteeing effective and equal access to free and quality early childhood education and care, with a special focus on families with children with disabilities, educational, school-based and community-based activities, alongside sport, leisure and cultural activities, healthcare, as well as effective access to healthy nutrition, and adequate housing for all children in need; stresses also that the competent authorities at national, regional and local level should be informed, trained and supported in securing EU funding; calls on the Member States to safeguard children's right to adequate housing, by providing related support to parents having difficulties with maintaining or accessing housing so that they can remain with their children, with a particular focus on young adults exiting child welfare institutions;

4. Believes that it is crucial to make considerable investments in children in order to eradicate child poverty and to enable them to grow and enjoy their full rights in the EU; stresses that this requires a holistic approach to early childhood development, starting with the first 1 000 days, which should guarantee maternal health, including mental health, safety, security and responsive caregiving; calls on Member States to ensure a strategic and comprehensive approach to implementing the Child Guarantee through adequate policies and resources, including through labour market integration, work-life balance measures for parents and guardians, and income support for families and households, so that financial barriers do not prevent children from accessing quality and inclusive services; calls for an overarching European anti-poverty strategy, with ambitious targets for reducing poverty and homelessness and ending extreme poverty in Europe by 2030, especially among children, in line with the principles laid down in the EPSR and the UN SDGs and building on the headline targets set out in the EPSR Action Plan;

5. Welcomes the fact that the views and suggestions of over 10 000 children have been taken on board in preparing the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child; calls on the Commission to ensure that children's voices, as well as those of their representative organisations, are heard in the implementation and monitoring of the Child Guarantee at national, regional and local level, by enabling them to be full participants in meaningful and inclusive public dialogue and consultation and have their say on matters that concern them at EU level, as was the case in the 2020 Forum on the Rights of the Child; calls, in this respect, on all Member States to specifically task a public authority, for example a children's commissioner or ombudsman, with measuring the effects on children of national and regional legislation and of the national measures to implement the Child Guarantee, as well as generally promoting children's rights in public policy, and calls on the Commission to examine the possibility of establishing a European Authority for Children to support and monitor Member States' implementation of the recommendation, coordinate national work, ensure the exchange of good practices and innovative solutions, and streamline reporting and recommendations;

6. Calls on the Member States to prioritise funding for children's rights according to the needs identified at national and regional level and strongly encourages them to go beyond the predefined allocations in EU funding schemes; calls on the Member States to inform, train and support local and regional authorities in securing EU funding; calls on Member States to ensure a coordinated approach in the programming and implementation of EU funds, and to speed up their implementation and dedicate all possible national resources, complemented by EU funds such as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (React-EU), the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), InvestEU, Erasmus+, the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF) and EU4Health, to the fight against child poverty and social exclusion; recalls that Member States must include dedicated measures investing in children and young people in their national recovery and resilience plans in order to access the fund, as per the 'Next Generation' pillar of the RRF; recalls the possibilities afforded by Next Generation EU to provide financial support also to organisations, for example NGOs and charities, and social help to families in need; calls, in this regard, on all Member States, not only those most affected by child poverty, to allocate at least 5 % of the ESF+ resources under shared management to supporting activities under the European Child Guarantee;

7. Calls on the Member States to take into account the particular situation of children in need, particularly those experiencing specific disadvantages within this group, when implementing the Child Guarantee; stresses that the Child Guarantee should contribute to the achievement of the goal of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of transitioning from institutional to family or community-based care; calls on the Member States to mainstream a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach throughout their implementation of the Child Guarantee;

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8. Believes that the Child Guarantee should become a permanent instrument to prevent and tackle child poverty in a structural manner in the EU; highlights the self-evident interconnection between Next Generation EU and the Child Guarantee as EU instruments for investing in the future generations and calls, therefore, for a strengthening of the synergies between the two Union programmes, also with a view to implementing fully and meaningfully the EPSR and the European Strategy on the Rights of the Child;
9. Highlights that Member States should both establish multi-annual national strategies on poverty reduction, as also defined in enabling condition 4.3 of the forthcoming Common Provisions Regulation for tackling child poverty and social exclusion, and ensure that the Child Guarantee national action plans are their concrete deliverables;
10. Calls on the Member States to eliminate all discrimination in access to free and quality childcare, education, healthcare, as well as adequate housing and healthy nutrition, and recreational activities, in order to guarantee full respect for applicable EU and national anti-discrimination law; calls for the urgent resumption of negotiations on the horizontal anti-discrimination directive as a key tool in this regard; encourages Member States to invest adequate resources in ending school class segregation and to promote inclusion in order to provide children with an equal start in life so as to break the poverty cycle as early as possible;
11. Recalls that access to running water and sanitation varies considerably across the Union, with an average connection to sewerage systems of 80 % to 90 % in northern, southern and central Europe, and a much lower average connection to sewerage and water treatment systems of 64 % in Eastern Europe ⁽¹⁸⁾; highlights that a lack of access to social housing is a barrier for income-poor children; expresses concern that for too many children basic water, sanitation and hygiene facilities remain out of reach and that the lack of access to basic sanitation services is particularly acute among the most vulnerable and marginalised children; calls on the Member States to ensure that every child has access to running water, sanitation and personal hygiene facilities, both at home and at school;
12. Calls on Member States to prioritise the provision of permanent housing to homeless children and their families, and to include housing solutions for children experiencing homelessness and severe housing exclusion in their national Child Guarantee action plans;
13. Points to the city-specific challenges of child poverty, in particular with a view to addressing the serious situation in the most deprived urban areas, which risks being overlooked in the absence of multifaceted and quality indicators able to grasp the reality on the ground; stresses the need to dedicate specific measures and resources to this area, with a view to putting in place quality, accessible and inclusive services for children in need and their families living in urban areas; stresses the need to involve local and regional authorities and municipalities, as well as civil society actors, in all phases of the implementation of the Child Guarantee;
14. Calls on the Member States to work towards achieving the targets set for the European Education Area (COM(2020)0625) and to continue to fully implement all relevant actions recommended in the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 (COM(2020)0758) in the area of education and training; calls on the Member States to nominate competent national coordinators equipped with adequate resources and a strong mandate, and with cross-departmental competence, without delay; calls for these coordinators to duly report every two years on the progress made on all aspects of the Child Guarantee and to regularly exchange best practices with their national counterparts; calls on the Commission to ensure reinforced institutional coordination;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support the creation and reinforcement of universal public childcare, education and healthcare networks, with high quality standards;
16. Calls on the Commission, in accordance with its EPSR Action Plan, to put forward a proposal for the revision of the Barcelona targets and the ECEC quality framework in order to support further upward convergence among Member States in the field of ECEC; stresses the need for EU initiatives to support online and distance learning for more flexible and inclusive primary and secondary education, while preserving face-to-face learning as the primary education method with guaranteed accessibility for all children, specifically children with disabilities; calls on the Member States to bridge the digital divide by scaling up and prioritising internet connectivity in remote and rural areas, as 10 % of households in the EU are still lacking internet access; calls for a public-private partnership at pan-European level for investing in reducing the digital divide and empowering children through digital and entrepreneurial skills; stresses the importance of equal access to digital

⁽¹⁸⁾ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/urban-waste-water-treatment/urban-waste-water-treatment-assessment-5>

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infrastructure and skills for children, teachers and parents alike, in both urban and rural settings, in order to avoid a digital divide, as well for children in remote and outlying regions; calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide financial support to areas in need of technological upgrading and comprehensive digital training for both teachers and students, in order to enable them to adapt to new technologies;

17. Calls on Member States to urgently address learning disruptions and educational inequalities caused by the COVID-19 crisis, both to enable children to learn remotely as swiftly as possible and to propose long-term solutions to structural inequalities; calls on the Member States to assess, implement and monitor access to education, particularly for children from vulnerable groups and backgrounds, and to ensure the same quality education during the pandemic, as well as to promote digital literacy and educational tools adapted to distance learning; is concerned that, in the context of the post-crisis recovery and the potential prolongation of the crisis, the need to tackle child poverty will increase and that poverty will have an ever greater impact on children as the most vulnerable group among the most disadvantaged; calls on Member States to prepare and prioritise immunisation solutions against COVID-19 for the categories of children identified by the guarantee, when they become widely available for children;

18. Recalls the key role that social economy enterprises and entrepreneurial activity with a social impact can play in helping to deliver the Child Guarantee and the need for investment in capacity building, access to finance, and entrepreneurial education and training in this area; stresses the need for synergies between the Child Guarantee and the forthcoming EU Action Plan for the Social Economy;

19. Believes that strategic investment with a social impact is crucial to ensure that the effect of the crisis on children, particularly those already experiencing or at risk of poverty and social inclusion and falling within the areas of specific disadvantage set out under the recommendation, does not become entrenched; stresses the importance of leveraging both public and private investment to achieve the aims of the guarantee and highlights the role of the InvestEU programme and fund in this regard, in particular through the social investment and skills and sustainable infrastructure policy windows;

20. Calls on the Commission and Member States to examine their current budgetary procedures related to social expenditure in order to highlight the distinct features investments in children can have over regular social expenditure when it comes to return, multipliers and opportunity costs;

21. Calls on the Member States to strengthen efforts to prevent harm from coming to children and to protect them from all forms of violence by developing strategies to identify and prioritise children at risk for prevention and response interventions in collaboration with parents, teachers, and health and community workers; calls on the Member States to prevent gender-based violence and to safeguard every child, giving special attention to girls and young women, by creating or strengthening monitoring and reporting mechanisms and specific services to respond to cases of gender-based violence;

22. Recalls that social protection and support to families is essential and calls on the competent national authorities to ensure adequate and accessible social protection systems and integrated child protection systems, including effective prevention, early intervention and family support, in order to ensure safety and security for children without or at risk of losing parental care, as well as measures to support the transition from institutional to quality family and community-based care; calls on the Member States to scale up investment in child protection systems and social welfare services as an important part of implementing the Child Guarantee; stresses that mental and physical health problems are widespread due to the current context of lockdowns, isolation and the educational environment and calls on the Member States to invest in the protection of the mental and physical health of children as a priority;

23. Calls for the Member States to provide social services, including those for the protection of minors, with sufficient financial, technical and human resources;

24. Calls on the Member States to work out specific strategies to protect children from online sexual abuse and exploitation, since in isolation children spend more time online which increases the risk of their exposure to online abuse, including child pornography and online bullying; urges Member States to conduct information campaigns for both parents and children regarding the dangers to which children are exposed in the online environment; calls on the Commission and the Member States to work closely with private sector operators to fund the development of new technologies to detect and eliminate materials containing child pornography and child sexual abuse;

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25. Recalls that a comprehensive approach is essential for lifting children out of poverty, which must include individualised support for their parents; calls on the Member States to boost investment in sustainable jobs and social support to parents, including during maternity and parental leave, and to implement targeted employment policies that ensure a decent standard of living, fair working conditions, a good work-life balance, an inclusive labour market and higher employability, with a focus on vocational education and training, and up- and re-skilling; calls on Member States to include such measures in their national Child Guarantee action plans; highlights that free early childcare support must be put in place for the smooth resumption of work for parents; calls on all Member States to recognise periods of providing care to dependent children in pension schemes and to ensure both financial and professional support for people taking care of family members with disabilities who live in the same home; stresses that caring for their relatives can often have a negative impact on their family and professional life and can lead to exclusion and discrimination; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take specific measures to safeguard the wellbeing of 'home-alone children' — children left behind by migrant parents;

26. Recalls that the proposal on adequate minimum wages aims at improving the income situation of working people, including that of parents, and women in particular; recalls that decent working conditions and fair wages must be complementary to anti-poverty measures, including the guarantee, while ensuring national particularities and respecting subsidiarity; believes that such an approach will thus improve children's well-being and reduce inequalities from an early age, thereby breaking the poverty cycle; reminds Member States that the Commission recommendation on effective active support to employment (EASE) (C(2021)1372) offers guidance on gradually transitioning from emergency measures taken to preserve jobs during the pandemic and new measures needed for a job-rich and growth-oriented recovery; welcomes the proposal for a Pay Transparency Directive, which aims at reducing the gender pay gap and thereby improving women's financial stability and economic independence in general, as well as enabling the women affected to escape poverty and situations of domestic violence;

27. Encourages Member States to tackle early school leaving; emphasises that the reinforced Youth Guarantee⁽¹⁹⁾ stipulates that all young people from the age of 15 should receive an offer for employment, education, traineeship or apprenticeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education; calls, furthermore, on the Member States to implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee, ensure high-quality offers, including fair remuneration, and promote the involvement of young people in Youth Guarantee services; underlines the importance of ensuring its complementarity with the Child Guarantee and the European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in order to respond to the needs of children with disabilities and provide better access to mainstream services and independent living;

28. Welcomes the establishment of governance, monitoring, reporting and evaluation mechanisms; calls on the Commission to continue monitoring progress in the European Semester, including via dedicated Social Scoreboard indicators, and to issue country-specific recommendations where needed; calls on the Commission to involve Parliament in the common monitoring framework and in the work of the Social Protection Committee; highlights the important role of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee in promoting dialogue with local and regional authorities and civil society; recalls the importance of introducing children's rights and wellbeing as parameters and indicators of the country-specific recommendations in the framework of the European Semester and in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights; calls on the Commission to adjust the Social Scoreboard indicators, including disaggregated data, to take into account all categories of children in need identified by the Commission, to further develop benchmarking for evaluating and monitoring the impact of the European Child Guarantee, and to design the institutional structure for mainstreaming its implementation;

29. Calls on the Member States to develop both multiannual national strategies to tackle child poverty and social exclusion and European Child Guarantee national action plans on the basis of the specific groups of children in need identified, objectives and the required funding to be allocated in order to make the enabling policy framework a reality; emphasises the need to define strong, measurable targets; recalls the importance of involving all responsible regional and local authorities and relevant stakeholders, including the social economy, educational institutions, the private sector, NGOs and civil society organisations, as well as children and parents themselves; calls on the Commission to regularly report to Parliament on the state of the implementation of the guarantee; reiterates the need to improve the collection of quality

⁽¹⁹⁾ OJ C 372, 4.11.2020, p. 1.

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disaggregated data at both Member State and EU level in order to help monitor and assess progress towards ending child poverty and social exclusion and inform monitoring and policy making; welcomes, in this regard, the inclusion of national frameworks for data collection under the national action plans to implement the Child Guarantee; highlights the need for all Member States to develop better-quality indicators in all fields of intervention of the Child Guarantee in order to grasp adequately the multidimensional challenges related to child poverty and social exclusion in education and childcare, healthcare, housing and access to adequate nutrition and with a view to strengthening its outreach to the most disadvantaged children; reiterates the importance of enabling Member States to exchange best practices;

30. Calls on the Council to swiftly adopt the proposal for a Council recommendation for establishing a European Child Guarantee;

31. Calls on the Council to unblock the Women on Boards Directive; stresses that representation of women in leadership conditions girls' and young women's school and career choice and contributes to ending inequalities in certain sectors of the job market where women are less represented, as well as improving the working conditions of feminised sectors;

32. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
