



Joint Statement:

THE POST-2020 MFF MUST INVEST IN CHILDREN AND AIM TO END CHILD POVERTY

More than 20 organisations within the **EU Alliance for Investing in Children** and the **Child Rights Action Group (CRAG)** urge the EU institutions and its Member States to invest in children and develop a future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) that works to end child poverty and promotes the social inclusion of all children in Europe.

The future of Europe depends on investing in children, in particular in children and families in vulnerable situations. The EU and its Member States need to act urgently to protect around 25 million children estimated to be living in or at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Growing up in poverty can negatively affect children's opportunities for the rest of their lives, with far-reaching consequences – for instance, on their future education, health, participation in the labour market and society. Early interventions to address children at risk of social exclusion or poverty, investing in family and community support and early childhood education and care are not only a moral imperative, they are also cost-effective measures.

The **MFF** is an important instrument for the EU and its Member States to leave no-one behind and to invest in children. In June 2017, the Council of the EU stressed the EU' and Member States' commitment to achieve the 17 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, including through greater efforts to promote social inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as children.¹

The Commission's **Reflection Paper on the Future of EU Finances** acknowledged that investing in people, from education and training to health equality and social inclusion, is the overarching priority for the EU.²

¹ Council of the European Union, Council Conclusions (20 June 2017): *A Sustainable European future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/20-2030-agenda-sustainable-development/>

² European Commission (June 2017), "[Reflection Paper on the Future of EU Finances](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/reflection-paper-future-eu-finances_en)", available at:
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/reflection-paper-future-eu-finances_en

The EU Alliance for Investing in Children fully supports these commitments and is proposing the following recommendations to ensure that the next MFF invests in children:

- 1. Ending child poverty and social exclusion in Europe should be a clear and visible priority in the next MFF.**
- 2. STRATEGY: The next MFF should be underpinned by an integrated strategy to implement the 2030 Agenda, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Recommendation on *Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage*³:**
 - This strategy should **prioritise the drastic reduction of child poverty in Europe** in line with SDG 1 to “reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty”.
 - The strategy needs to integrate the **European Pillar of Social Rights** and its relevant principles, including principle 11 which recognises that children have a right to protection from poverty.⁴
 - The **European Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children** is the strategic framework to realise Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which promotes the well-being of all children. The Recommendation’s implementation should be financially supported by the EU.
 - The **European Semester** cycle has the potential to monitor the use of EU funds in Member States and ensure links to EU policy guidance and national agendas of policy reform. It could do so by monitoring compliance with ex-ante conditionalities throughout the programming and implementation period. The EU Semester should enable synergies between the Europe2020 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- 3. STRUCTURE AND SIZE: The size of the next MFF should be adequate to fight child poverty and ensure child well-being in Europe:**
 - The resources for social inclusion in the next MFF should be increased. At least the equivalent of **30%** of the current European Social Fund should be earmarked for social inclusion. Such spending on social inclusion must cover efforts to prevent and tackle child poverty to unlock the social and financial long-term gains of investing in children.
 - The UK leaving the EU and the possible development of new funding instruments for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) should not result in fewer resources for social inclusion.
- 4. APPROACH: The next MFF should promote a life cycle approach to social investment and social protection:**

³ European Commission Recommendation (20 February 2013) *Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage* (2013/112/EU) <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H0112&from=EN>

⁴ European Commission (26 April 2017), Commission recommendation on the European Pillar of Social Rights https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/commission-recommendation-establishing-european-pillar-social-rights_en

- In case EU funding for boosting employment, skills and combating poverty are gathered under one funding instrument, its main objective should be **promoting social inclusion and well-being, social investment and adequate social protection with a life-cycle approach**.
- This would ensure a strong focus on investment for the most vulnerable children and families so that they have **access to quality, accessible and inclusive community-based services** (e.g. health, social services, family support, education, housing, and child protection) and **adequate social protection for children and families** throughout the life cycles (e.g. minimum income, unemployment, childcare, as well as child and housing benefits).
- Promoting social inclusion and well-being of people are objectives of the EU. It is imperative to recognise that social inclusion, well-being and health are closely interconnected with the economic performance of the EU.

5. SUPPORT THE NATIONAL LEVEL: The EU funds aiming at poverty reduction and social inclusion under the next MFF should encourage national poverty reduction strategies and action plans:

- EU funds should support Member States in implementing policy reforms to reducing social and health inequalities among all children and tackle child poverty in line with the EC Recommendation on Investing in Children and its three pillars: access to resources, access to quality services and child participation.
- In doing so, Member States should make sure that EU funds reach all children and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion regardless of their migration or residence status.
- Local stakeholders play an important role in the implementation of national poverty reduction strategies and action plans. EU funds should support the capacity of local stakeholders, who provide frontline services and are best placed to deliver policy outcomes such as those included in the EC Recommendation on Investing in Children.
- The European Commission's monitoring role of EU funds needs to be strengthened, and formalized in the monitoring committees, as well as ex-ante conditionalities should be monitored both at the regulatory and the programming levels. Civil society and service users should also be fully involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of projects.

6. SIMPLIFICATION: The simplification of the rules of the future MFF should aim to further promote the engagement of stakeholders, including CSOs, and increase adequate funds absorption:

- Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have an important role in reaching people in vulnerable situations and the most disadvantaged. To support, monitor and report on implementation of EU and national policies CSOs need sufficient capacity and support to play this role and to help improve financial mechanisms. EU funds are essential to strengthening the capacity of CSOs, and access to these funds also needs to be ensured for grassroots organisations.
- Furthermore, simplification of the rules of future EU Funds should not amount in lifting mechanisms (e.g. the ex-ante conditionalities) that are there to ensure the compliance of projects financed by EU funds with human rights obligations (e.g. under EU Charter for Fundamental Rights, or the UN Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and on the Rights of the Child) and EU values.

- Additional resources should be dedicated to involving children and their families in vulnerable situations in the design, delivery and monitoring of child well-being and child poverty strategies in the related EU funding.

Endnote:

The EU Alliance for Investing in Children has been advocating for a multidimensional, rights-based approach to tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being since 2014.

This statement was endorsed by the following partner organisations of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children:

Alliance for Childhood European Network Group;

ATD Fourth World;

Caritas Europa;

COFACE Families Europe;

Don Bosco International;

Dynamo International – Street Workers Network;

Eurochild;

Eurodiaconia;

EuroHealthNet;

European Anti-Poverty Network – EAPN

European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities – EASPD;

European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless – FEANTSA;

European Public Health Alliance – EPHA;

Mental Health Europe;

Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants – PICUM;

Save the Children;

SOS Children’s Villages International.

This statement is further supported by the following organisations beyond the Alliance:

Defence for Children International

ECPAT International

European Network of Migrant Women - ENOMW

European Network on Statelessness

Global Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children

International Catholic Migration Commission Europe - ICMC Europe

Terre des Hommes - TDH

World Organization for Early Childhood Education - OMEP

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