

Will it deliver for children?

**Eurochild analysis of the EU's Action Plan on the
European Pillar of Social Rights**



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

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Eurochild analysis of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

On 4th March 2021, the European Commission presented the long-awaited [Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights](#). The document outlines specific policies, targets and frameworks, to turn the [20 principles of the Social Pillar](#) into action.

In the past years, Eurochild has been calling for a comprehensive Action Plan that would put children and their rights at its forefront, and in November 2020, [made key recommendations](#) of how the Action Plan can bring about positive changes for the lives of all children and, in particular, those affected by poverty and disadvantage. Using these recommendations as a benchmark, the document analyses the proposed Action Plan from a child rights perspective.

Given that the EU national leaders will gather in Porto on 7th May to discuss and adopt a position on the Action Plan, the document also includes a series of recommendations aimed at influencing their decisions and ensuring that Member States will concretely commit to tackle child poverty and protect children's social rights. Furthermore, in the following paragraphs, this paper offers a detailed review of the instruments included in the plan and presents suggestions on how to use these elements to improve the lives of the youngest European citizens.

We welcome:

- The setting up of a **child-specific poverty target**, even if we believe that the target proposed by the European Commission is not ambitious enough
- The Action Plan's commitment to **available, affordable and high-quality ECEC** and the **revision** of the **Barcelona Targets**,¹ albeit it is concerning that the value of early childhood education and care (ECEC) is considered merely in terms of its importance for employment and women's participation in the workforce rather than from a child-centred perspective
- The encouragement towards Member States to provide accessible and affordable ECEC for all young children across Europe

¹ For more information on the Barcelona targets you can consult: European Commission's '[Barcelona Objectives on the development of childcare facilities for young children with a view to increase female labor participation, strike a work-life balance for working parents and bring about sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe](#)' (2018) and '[Barcelona objectives – The development of childcare facilities for young children in Europe with a view to sustainable and inclusive growth](#)' (2013)

- The revision of the **Social Scoreboard** and the new **child specific headline indicator** on child poverty and **secondary indicators** on children from age 3 to mandatory school age in formal childcare and underachievement in education - including digital skills
- The Action Plan offers many opportunities to set up initiatives that could have a **positive impact on the well-being of children**, such as guaranteeing adequate minimum income, fighting in-work poverty, reducing unemployment, ensuring access to affordable housing, and an extension of social protection for children and families
- The Action Plan encourages Member States to develop **comprehensive policies to provide access to quality education for all** and provide **targeted support to disadvantaged learners**
- The Action Plan promotes better policies on physical and mental health, e.g. promoting access to quality healthcare for all and new monitoring tools to better map inequalities
- The Action Plan aims to achieve a **Union of equality** and **eliminate discrimination** based on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. However, we are concerned that the Anti-discrimination Directive does not go far enough to prevent the anti-child-rights movement from undermining progress
- The Action Plan recognises the pivotal role played by children in achieving the **EU green transition**
- The Social Pillar will guide the **EU's external action**, including its relations with neighbourhood and enlargement partners; the EU international action should indeed promote investment in children and include measures to tackle child poverty

Yet, we call on:

- Member States to adopt **higher national targets** of reducing child poverty, in line with their commitments on [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 1](#) and the severe impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on children's lives
- Member States to implement the Action Plan by **strategically using** the different **EU funds** available to invest in children, including in children in their very early years
- The European Commission to set up **additional disaggregated indicators** to take into account the most vulnerable groups of children, better align with the areas of action of the Child Guarantee (expected to be published on the 24th March), and include crucial issues such as early childhood development and deinstitutionalisation

- Member States to ensure a **more comprehensive approach** which includes families' access to resources and children's participation, and a holistic implementation of all 20 principles of the Social Pillar
- The European Institutions to approach **early childhood development** from a comprehensive and holistic perspective, and not limited to early childhood education and care, framed in the context of enabling parents' participation in the labour market. Member States should invest in the various elements that contribute to positive early childhood development, such as maternal and child health-care, nutrition, adequate housing, family and parenting support, and including social security
- Member States to **put children's rights at the forefront of the implementation of the Action Plan** and ensure it has a child-centred focus; Member States to adopt comprehensive strategies on the rights of the child, including the right to participate in decision-making processes
- Member States to ensure **no money is spent on building new institutions or 'greening' existing institutions** for children in alternative care rather to upscale family and community based care and services for children
- The EU institutions should ensure the meaningful **engagement of civil society, social partners, children and families** in monitoring and implementation of the Action Plan

The Action Plan is an important milestone in building a Union of equality and social inclusion. Yet, to achieve a real transformative change, the Plan should lead to much greater attention to and investment in the rights of all children. This must include children in their earliest years and, in particular, those facing exclusion and discrimination, an appropriate target on child poverty, and meaningful and rights-based processes of child participation.

We thus hope that Member States consider this recommendation while participating in the Porto Social Summit and commit to a more ambitious protection of children's human rights. We also hope that the forthcoming EU Child Guarantee and EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child will contribute to delivering an ambitious agenda for all Europe's children.

Detailed analysis of the Action Plan

The proposed target for reducing child poverty is not ambitious enough

Eurochild has been calling^{2,3} for the EU to solidify its commitment to tackling child poverty by setting an **ambitious target to end extreme poverty by 2030 and to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion by 50%**. By achieving such a target, the EU and its Member States would comply with the [commitment to implement the UN 2030 Agenda](#). In particular, [SDG 1](#), which aims at eradicating extreme poverty and halving child poverty in all its dimension by 2030⁴, and [SDG 10](#) to reduce inequality within and among countries, as stated by Professor Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, on his visit to the EU in January 2021.⁵

The Action Plan proposes to lift at least **15 million people out of poverty by 2030**, of which **at least 5 million should be children**. We acknowledge that by setting a target the European Commission has taken an important step forward in the fight against child poverty. It acknowledges that tackling child poverty is a fundamental pre-requisite in building a strong Social Europe. Yet, we also believe that the proposed target **is not ambitious enough**.

According to the Action Plan, before the COVID-19 crisis, **17.9 million children** were already living in poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, the proposed target of 5 million represents **27%** of the total amount of children experiencing poverty and social exclusion in 2019. This means not only that the target does not fulfil the requirements of SDG1 but also that, if achieved, the target would still **not reach 73% of those children**. Furthermore, it has to be highlighted that these figures do not take into consideration the disastrous effect that the pandemic is having on children's rights and well-being. The crisis is deepening inequalities and worsening pre-existing vulnerabilities, and thus the number of children currently living in poverty and social exclusion has increased. Therefore, this is not the moment for the EU to shy away by proposing a target that is lower than the one proposed in 2010, which aimed to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or social exclusion by 2020⁶.

For this reason, we are calling on EU Member States to **set higher national targets** that will comply with the SDG1, take into consideration the social crisis we are experiencing, and go **beyond the EU target**. Specifically, if the EU wants to concretely tackle child poverty and social

² Eurochild, [‘A strong social Europe must target child poverty’](#)

³ Eurochild, [‘Protecting children’s rights to build a Social Europe’](#)

⁴ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a comprehensive policy framework to which European countries are also bound and that should guide the Action Plan. The SDGs can help drive delivery on children's rights within EU Member States across a range of policy areas, including child poverty. However, ownership of the SDG framework from the EU has so far been limited. There needs to be a rigorous review of the SDGs and indicators to ensure their relevance for an EU context. The Action Plan could represent a step forward in this direction.

⁵ OHCHR, [Statement by Professor Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, on his visit to the European Union](#), 29 January 2021

⁶ European Commission, [Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth](#)

exclusion, it should aim to ensure that **at least 9 million children will be lifted out of poverty and social exclusion by 2030.**

The Action Plan does not set up a concrete and comprehensive system

Eurochild called for the European Commission to base the Action Plan on concrete **synergies among policy areas** to embed integrated working, acknowledge the crosscutting impact of policies on children, and highlighted that the best interests of the child and the promotion of their well-being should be the cornerstone of these synergies. Yet, the document does not provide a concrete plan of action for the implementation of all the 20 principles of the Social Pillar, but rather seems to focus on those areas which were already covered by its Working Plan.

Furthermore, the document states that European Semester process will play a crucial role in monitoring the Action Plan's implementation at the national level providing Member States with technical support, coordination, and guidance. Eurochild supports the plan to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan through the framework of the European Semester process. Our members have consistently reported that they would wish for more and stronger social elements in the Country-Specific Recommendations, or in the reformed 2021 Semester Process – in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans. We would also like to see more specific child-centred recommendations that would direct Member States to take action, and would then be assessed in the monitoring process. Yet, the Action Plan does not provide a detailed explanation of how the European Semester process will work after the exceptional 2021 cycle and what reforms will be set up to strengthen its capacity and ensure an effective and impactful monitoring of the Action Plan implementation.

The Action Plan does not offer a comprehensive approach, which would include child participation and access to resources

Eurochild has highlighted that, to tackle child poverty and social exclusion efficiently, Member States must invest in children via a comprehensive approach based on the three pillars of the 2013 Investing in Children Recommendation; i.e. access to adequate resources access to affordable quality services, children's right to participate.

Ensuring access to essential services is a key element of the Action Plan. As stated in the document, the Commission recognises that effective access to essential services of sufficient quality, such as water, sanitation, healthcare, energy, transport, is key to guaranteeing social and economic inclusion. The Action Plan also recognises that the **Child Guarantee** initiative will represent one of the key actions to ensure access to basic services to vulnerable children. We also hope the **EU report on access to essential services**, planned for 2022, will sufficiently

include the perspective of children, including those experiencing exclusion and discrimination.

Regrettably, while the Action Plan rightly highlights the importance the Child Guarantee will play in ensuring children's access to services, it doesn't cover sufficiently the other two pillars of the 2013 Investing in Children Recommendation. With regards to child participation, Eurochild believes that engaging with children on what is important for them, what they would like to see changed, is in itself a means to increase their autonomy, self-awareness, sense of agency and self-confidence - which are key to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Considering that the European Pillar of Social Rights Staff Working Document calls EU Member States to put in place "*national strategies on child participation to promote awareness on how to involve children in all actions and decisions that concern them*"⁷, the Action Plan should have ensured meaningful processes of **child participation**,⁸ in order to involve children in all actions and decisions that directly and indirectly concern them.

Unfortunately, the Action Plan does not mention **structural mechanisms** which allow children, including those with vulnerable backgrounds, to participate in public decisions to ensure policies are addressing their needs, nor **national child participation strategies** which can help change the way professionals and decision-makers engage with children and can lead to a child rights approach to policy development.

Given the lack of mention of this pivotal issue in the Action Plan, Member States should include **child participation as a horizontal principle** in the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation and we call on EU Member States to develop structures that will support the meaningful involvement of all children, including those who are marginalised and in vulnerable situations⁹ and their parents, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Child Guarantee action plans and the multi-annual national strategies.

Eurochild stands ready to support Member States to implement child participation in their decision-making processes and is encouraged by several countries' enthusiasm to use the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool¹⁰.

EU Member States should strengthen the monitoring and implementation of the Action Plan by setting up more disaggregated and child-specific indicators and engaging meaningfully with civil society organisations, children and families

In its contribution to the European Commission's consultation on the Action Plan, Eurochild called for a **renewed Social Scoreboard** characterised by **more child-specific indicators** that

⁷ European Commission, [Commission Staff Working Document](#)

⁸ As requested by the European Commission [Staff Working Document](#)

⁹ Such as children with disabilities, children at risk of poverty, children in institutions, children in migration and children belonging to ethnic minorities, such as the Roma.

¹⁰ Council of Europe, [Child Participation Assessment Tool](#)

would be rigorously applied in the European Semester process. We thus **welcome the revision of the Social Scoreboard** proposed by the Action Plan and the **new headline indicator** for at-risk-of poverty rate or exclusion for children (0-17). We also **appreciate the strengthening of secondary indicators**, such as the one related to children from the age of three to mandatory primary school age in formal child care and those related to Member States expenditure on social protection, education, and healthcare.

On the other hand, we must recognise that these indicators are **limited to child poverty and childcare**, which does not present a comprehensive approach to assessing children's well-being. The Renewed Social Scoreboard must be characterised by **more child-specific indicators** and be applied rigorously in the European Semester process to increase Member States commitment and action on social inclusion.

Hence, the European Commission should cooperate with the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee to **further develop the secondary indicators**. All the relevant indicators should be disaggregated to take into account the **most vulnerable groups of children** and to better align with the **areas of action of the Child Guarantee**.¹¹ Furthermore, Eurochild firmly believes that the European Commission should elaborate specific indicators on **early childhood development** and on **children in alternative care** with specification of institutional, residential and foster care.

We also believe the European Commission should **engage with civil society organisations, children and families** while monitoring Member States' implementation of the Action Plan. The Action Plan does underline the importance for EU institutions to collaborate with all stakeholders in the implementation of the Social Pillar, including civil society organisations. Regrettably, the document only refers to the necessity to strengthen social dialogue and fails to mention the importance of civil dialogue. Successful implementation of the Social Pillar relies on **strong civil society engagement and ownership**. The EU Member States should thus ensure the meaningful **engagement of civil society, children and families** in monitoring and implementation of the Action Plan. Particular attention should be paid to the inclusion of children and families experiencing poverty and social exclusion and civil society organisations representing them.

We fully support the European Commission in its call for Member States to organise a coordination mechanism to ensure engagement of all relevant stakeholders at national level in implementing the Pillar, and we advocate for the strong inclusion of organisations working with and for children in this process.

¹¹ EU Alliance for Investing in children, [EU Alliance for Investing in Children statement to the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#), 2021

Member States must ensure a strategic use of EU funding

Member States must ensure the funding allocated through all EU mechanisms is **used to strategically invest in children**, both in the EU and in its external programs, such as the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the Instrument for pre-accession assistance. **Investing in children** should be a **non-questionable priority** if we want to fully implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, and achieve a more social Europe where the rights of children are implemented.

In particular, the ESF+ should not be considered as the only EU financial resource that should be used to tackle child poverty. Member states must use other EU financial resources to tackle child poverty, deliver the future Child Guarantee Council Recommendation, and enhance children's well-being. These financial resources include the European Regional Development Fund, the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund, InvestEU, Erasmus Plus, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the Recovery and Resilience Facility and funding available in the field of healthcare.

The EU Member States should also commit to systematically report on the implementation of the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation and Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights through **Child Guarantee National Implementation Plans** and the **European Semester Process**.

Member States must ensure no money is spent on building new institutions or 'greening' existing institutions

Poverty and social exclusion can be an underlying cause of children being placed in out-of-home care. The measures and specific targets in the Action Plan that support employment, quality of life, work-life balance and social protection could contribute to reducing institutionalisation. Unfortunately, the Action Plan **fails to highlight deinstitutionalisation as a priority in building a social Europe**, or to encourage the process of transition from institutional to community-based care. This is concerning, given the fact that estimates show there are at least **345,000 children in Europe living in institutions**.¹²

We welcome that the Action Plan makes linkages to other important strategies and instruments in the field of deinstitutionalisation, such as the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, the [Disability Rights Strategy](#), and the Child Guarantee – as these documents will importantly complement each other. On the other hand, the Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the Child Guarantee are not yet published, it is not yet possible to assess to what extent they address deinstitutionalisation.

¹²https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/dalli/announcements/speech-commissioner-dalli-towards-inclusion-2020-what-vision-future-deinstitutionalisation-and-role_en

We thus call Member States to **ensure no money is spent on building new institutions or 'greening' existing institutions for adults and children**. Rather, social rights should be fulfilled by the development and the deployment of community-based services.

The Plan lacks initiatives for a comprehensive investment on Early Childhood Development

From a child rights perspective, the Action Plan does not adequately reflect the many policy areas that affect children. In particular, provision for children in their very early years in the Action Plan, does not reflect the fact that an inclusive, prosperous, 'Social Europe' needs to take early childhood into account and deliver on the rights of children.

The **broader concept of early childhood development (ECD) is absent from the Plan**, with no specific commitments to invest in ECD, beyond investing in early childhood education and care (ECEC). The Plan thus **lacks initiatives** for investing in other elements of early childhood development, such as maternal care, nutrition, healthcare, adequate housing, and family and parenting support.

The Action Plan's commitment to available, affordable and high quality ECEC is welcomed, but it is **concerning that the value of ECEC is considered merely in terms of its importance for employment and women's participation in the workforce rather than from a holistic child-centred perspective**. Revision of the Barcelona targets, while welcomed, is driven by the need to improve female labour market participation. The EU must ensure children's quality early childhood education and care not because of its economic and employment impact, but because **it is a human right of children**, essential for their healthy development and well-being, as **declared under Principle 11 of the Pillar**.

Overall, the recognition to tackle child poverty and social exclusion are welcomed, but children - including very young children - must be recognised in their own rights. The **Action Plan is not ambitious enough from an ECD perspective**, and does not fully reflect the range of rights that children have, including very young children – such as their rights to health, nutrition, safety, leisure and play. Therefore, we look for much needed additional, concrete commitments in the forthcoming Member States implementation of the Action Plan, the EU Child Guarantee and the Child Rights Strategy.

Supporting the well-being of children

The Action Plan offers many opportunities to set up initiatives which could have an impact on the well-being of children through guaranteeing adequate working and living conditions to everyone residing in the EU, including children and families.

Guaranteeing adequate minimum income, fighting in-work poverty and reducing unemployment directly improves families' financial stability and thus diminishes the risk of

child poverty. Initiatives on **improving working conditions, supporting occupational safety, health, work-life balance, and investing in the social economy** all improve the well-being of our society as a whole, including children. Adoption of the [EU Work-life Balance Directive](#) and its transposition by Member States is an important milestone to facilitate a conciliation of work and private life. The provision of paid leave has a positive effect, in particular for women, and contributes to reducing gender gap in employment and a better quality of family life.

Access to affordable housing is another goal of the Action Plan that directly impacts families with children – as they are often the ones for whom housing costs pose a heavy burden. Actions on **combatting homelessness, promoting affordable housing and alleviating energy poverty** thus present a great potential for support to households at risk of poverty.

Social protection for children and families also has a strong potential to prevent them falling into poverty. We support that the European Commission **encourages Member States to further extend access to social protection**, in line with the Council Recommendation on Access to social protection, and to submit their plans by 15 May 2021 setting out their national measures. However, we call on both Member States and the European Commission to ensure that impactful **social protection measures for children** have a dedicated space within those plans.

Education

Eurochild welcomes that the European Commission encourages Member States to develop **comprehensive policies to provide access to quality education for all** in line with the several relevant Council Recommendations¹³. Nevertheless, we believe **education should be a key EU priority**, and needs to be recognised for its intrinsic value, and not merely as a way to ensure a skilled workforce or support the green and digital transition. Findings from consultations with 10.000 children show that school systems do not sufficiently meet the needs of children in the 21st century.¹⁴ Education should be designed to meet present and future needs, and taking full account of children's views on curriculum, teaching methods and school environments. Member States must guarantee free access to quality, inclusive and safe education for every child.

As the Action Plan calls for the modernisation of schools and vocational and training centres, this needs to be specifically applied to the centres providing services in the framework of the **Child Guarantee**.

¹³ Council Recommendation ST/9010/2018/INIT of 22 May 2018; Council Recommendation ST/9009/2018/INIT of 22 May 2018; Council Recommendation ST/9015/2019/INIT of 22 May 2019.

¹⁴ ChildFund Alliance, Eurochild, Save the Children, UNICEF, World Vision, [‘Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future’](#), 2021

We especially support the call for Member States to provide **targeted support to disadvantaged learners** to compensate for the negative impact of the crisis. Children living in poverty, children with disabilities, Roma and migrant children have been some of the hardest hit by the pandemic, especially with regards to access to education and digital learning. As mentioned in the text of the Action Plan, and revealed by Eurochild's '[Growing Up in Lockdown](#)' report, children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have been facing major obstacles in accessing online learning and continuing education and training. It is therefore essential that all possible measures are taken to ensure all children have access to and are able to participate in quality education. Therefore, the **Child Guarantee** instrument must ensure access to inclusive quality education, for the most vulnerable groups of children.

Healthcare

Promoting physical and mental health is another key priority of the Action Plan, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Action Plan calls on Member States to **reinforce primary health care and mental health**, and to **improve access to quality healthcare for all** and **reduce social, territorial and economic inequalities in health**. It also proposes the development of **new statistical and monitoring tools** in order to **better map health inequalities**, highlight the patients' perspective and **improve access to health for the most vulnerable**.

Eurochild recognises the vital importance of **access to healthcare for children, especially in their early years**. **Early child development starts with maternal health**, which together with the first years, continues being a crucial **foundation for a person's health throughout their entire life**. Access to maternal health services is often limited for women from marginalised groups, which poses dangers both for them and for their children. Ensuring universal access to healthcare for women, children and families in need is crucial – and we hope that the actions under the EU Child Guarantee will bring positive and measurable results to that end.

Moreover, Eurochild's report '[Growing Up in Lockdown](#)' and the '[Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future](#)' report shows the disastrous impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the **mental health and well-being of children, as well as their families**. Children described the alarming rate of poor mental health as caused by anxiety about the future, bullying, challenges in coping with school and loneliness, much of it compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, although there might be more deposited structural roots. This confirms that mental health and wellbeing must be one of the key investment priorities for tackling the impact of the pandemic.

Building a Union of equality

The Action Plan is a valuable contribution to **achieving a Union of Equality and eliminating discrimination based on grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.**

We strongly support the aim of the Action Plan to **combat stereotypes and discrimination in employment, training, education, social protection, housing and health**, as well as allowing for **EU funds** such as ESF+, ERDF, Creative Europe and Erasmus+ to finance initiatives that support these goals. Dedicating a specific budget of EUR 1.55 billion through the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme, targeted to promote gender equality, equal treatment and equal rights of all, allows for EU investments to go to initiatives supporting the rights of children across the EU, eliminating discrimination and promoting inclusion and equal opportunities.

Many children experience discrimination and social exclusion, from the earliest years, including children with disabilities, Roma and traveller children, children with a migrant background, LGBTQI+ children, and children in institutional care. Eurochild therefore welcomes the adoption of the [EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), and the [Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation](#), as they have the potential to tackle discrimination and improve equal opportunities for children from these most vulnerable groups.

Involving children in the Green Transition

Eurochild is glad to see the **appreciation of the role of children in achieving Europe's Green transition** – as the Action Plan points out, promotion of environmental sustainability starts at an early age. The report '[Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future](#)' calls for the EU to support children's and young people's rights-based participation in discussions and decision making on climate change. The proposed Council Recommendation¹⁵ on integrating biodiversity and ecosystems in education and training, included in the Action Plan, can be a first step in that direction. At the same time, we must stress that the strived for green and digital transition, although a prerequisite for a sustainable future, cannot work without the respect of all citizens' social rights, including children.

International action

We strongly agree with the statement that the Social Pillar needs to guide EU's international action, and for the need for the EU to assume a role of a responsible global leader. The Action

¹⁵ COM(2020) 625 final of 30 September 2020

Plan establishes the Pillar as a guiding tool for the EU bilateral relations with external partners, including the **neighbourhood and enlargement partners**, and aims to promote the implementation of the Social Pillar in the Western Balkans. Eurochild calls for those actions to take into account all the principles of the Pillar, including Principle 11 on Childcare and support to children. We also call on the European Commission to promote **investment in children and include measures to tackle child poverty in the Economic and Reform Programme process**, which guides the accession countries on their path of convergence towards the EU.

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