

European Competence Centre for Social Innovation
Community of Practice on Social Inclusion

Mapping and exploration event on the subtheme of child poverty

27 February 2023, online event

Summary report

The first Mapping and Exploration event of the Community of Practice (CoP) on Social Inclusion took place online on February 27, 2023. The focus of this event was on child poverty, and we welcomed almost 90 participants from across the EU, of whom 36 were representatives of Member States and ESF agencies, and 19 European Commission (EC) participants. Participants joined from 20 EU Member States (MS), namely Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.

The overarching objective of the event was the implementation of the first mapping and illustrating phase ("HOP") of the work programme. New challenges have arisen in the past year, e. g. recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, a war in Ukraine, high inflation, and energy poverty. This has a substantial impact on how the ESF+ could and should be used to combat social exclusion and should be seen in the light of the requirement enshrined in the ESF+ Regulation to allocate a substantial percentage of the ESF+ resources for social inclusion (at least 25% for all Member States) and for the implementation of the Child Guarantee (at least 5% for MS with challenges in this area).

Objectives of the event:

- To discuss and map the existing and new challenges regarding social inclusion of children living in poverty.
- To gain a better understanding of the situation in MS and measures needed to fight child poverty.
- To discuss and map the changing requirements of support systems and social services. To assess affordability, availability, and effectiveness of services.
- To review the ESF+ instruments available for tackling the existing and new challenges, including the ESF+ programming and preparations.
- To present ESF+ funded interventions that proved to be effective.
- To support MAs to better implement the European Child Guarantee (ECG).

I – key points from the presentations

- a) Twenty million children live in poverty. These figures do not improve and on the contrary, due to the energy crisis, high inflation, and post-Corona situation, there is an upward trend. Extreme poverty is rising. A specific and very well-focused approach might be needed.
- b) In 17 EU countries, the percentage of children living in poverty is going up; in only 9 MS, it is going down. An integrated, holistic approach is needed, and this should include social housing and family support.
- c) Most MS either invest more than the required 5% of their ESF+ budget in combating child poverty or have the intention to do so. Until now, the ESF+ programming against child poverty has reached 8.9 billion EUR in 23 MS (all except DK, NL, SL, and SK).
- d) Early intervention is of paramount importance. Quality and accessibility of care, also for the most vulnerable children, is key.
- e) There is a need to address the shortage of social workers/professionals working with children and other specialists, such as paediatricians. These professionals should be adequately remunerated and provided with further education, training, and support.
- f) Data, indicators and monitoring frameworks of Child Guarantee (CG) vary significantly across different MSs. With aim to get a comprehensive and comparative overview, the EC has started developing the common monitoring and evaluation framework for the ECG. This will be informed by the monitoring & evaluation frameworks included in the submitted NAPs (National Action Plans?).
- g) Mutual learning and capacity building is indeed something that the EC deeply supports, and the close involvement of civil society organisations adds great value to the content of the event. Furthermore, it is important to consult and/or meaningfully involve children and include their opinions in these discussions.
- h) The action plans on the implementation of the Child Guarantee are living documents, and the hope is that the MS will take into consideration the findings presented at the event and further reflect on how to encompass all these things in future updates of the plan.

II – key factors for successful ESF+ interventions

- a) As shown by the presentations made by Managing Authorities (MA) representatives, child benefits and child allowances can make a difference, but the implementation process is not easy.
- b) The National Coordinator of CG in Spain presented that it is important to have a comprehensive approach, where poverty is seen as having multiple dimensions, which include both a lack of funding and a lack of access to social services crucial for child development and breaking the cycle of poverty.
- c) Bulgaria's National Coordinator highlighted the importance of having an overall strategic framework of all policies for children. This is the pre-requisite for successful implementation and allocation of EU and national funding. Policies and funding must be aligned.
- d) As stated by the representatives of the MAs of Malta and Slovakia, it is important to co-ordinately address the challenges in child poverty, family support, deinstitutionalisation, and social housing.
- e) As shown by the presentations of the MAs of Malta and Slovakia, complementarity with the other funds is of paramount importance to have successful ESF+ interventions.

III – next steps

- a) Improvement of the CoP activities by strengthening and building connections with the representatives of the Managing Authorities and key stakeholders through surveys and meetings. Discussions in smaller groups would be welcome during the meetings.
- b) Upload of all reports and other relevant information to the CoPs' Microsoft Teams platform and sharing via email. The expression of interest form to join the Microsoft Teams platform is [here](#).
- c) Collecting more models of good practice implemented by ESF+ funding.
- d) Organising the next CoP meetings foreseen for August/September. It will be a round of consultations with the Managing Authorities.
- e) Launch of a website for the ESF+ SI+ Initiative.

Please follow the link to learn more about the [ESF Social Innovation+ Initiative](#)

For any questions (e. g. need for support, membership, etc.), please contact cop@esf.lt

