



Federal Ministry for  
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women and Youth



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REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA  
MINISTRSTVO ZA DELO, DRUŽINO,  
SOCIALNE ZADEVE IN ENAKE MOŽNOSTI

# Joint Declaration by the Ministers of the EPSCO Council

Overcoming poverty and social exclusion – mitigating the impact  
of COVID-19 on families – working together to develop prospects  
for strong children





## Preface

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The Joint Declaration “Overcoming poverty and social exclusion – mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on families – working together to develop prospects for strong children” was proposed at the initiative of Germany’s Presidency of the Council of the EU by the current presidency trio of Portugal, Slovenia and Germany.

The aim of the Joint Declaration is to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – particularly on children and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The signatory Member States call on the EU and its Member States to take firm action against child poverty. The Declaration aims to support a long-term European policy strategy to reduce child and family poverty as well as social exclusion.





# Joint Declaration

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## BACKGROUND

Around a quarter of all children in the EU are at risk of poverty or social exclusion<sup>1</sup>.

The COVID-19 outbreak is now having far-reaching effects on Europe's economic and social fabric and, consequently, on children's well-being. The crisis is exacerbating existing inequalities, and putting huge pressure on available health and social welfare services. Child poverty levels are thus likely to escalate as the full economic impact of the pandemic becomes apparent, making it even more urgent to act. It exposes the lack of national policies to tackle poverty, particularly child poverty, and draws attention to the need for a multi-dimensional approach.

In the past, there have already been many initiatives to reduce child poverty and social exclusion and to promote equal access to affordable and inclusive services of good quality for all children. Noteworthy in this regard are the EU Commission Recommendation of 2013<sup>2</sup> and the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) of 2017.

In 2015, the European Parliament called for a European Child Guarantee, aimed at ensuring that all children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe have access to free healthcare, free education, free early childhood education and care, decent housing and adequate nutrition. In her political guidelines for 2019–2024, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made it a priority for the European Union to tackle child and family poverty by creating a European Child Guarantee. The EU Commission announced a proposal for a Council Recommendation on the European Child Guarantee for 2021, which will be one measure of the comprehensive EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, and will form part of the Commission's intention for a corresponding Action Plan to be presented by early 2021.

The European Child Guarantee will be a crucial opportunity to invest more and more effectively in the prevention and reduction of child poverty in Europe. Its political dimension will focus on the need for comprehensive strategic interventions, balancing universal provisions available to all children with the need to reach children most in need.

## DECLARATION

This Declaration aims at supporting the EU Commission in its efforts to ensure that the EU and its Member States take firm action against child poverty and strengthen the rights of children. In Europe, more needs to be invested in children.

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1 The rate varies between Member States from 14 to 50 per cent.

2 2013/112/EU: Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013 Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage



This is to be achieved in the following main areas:

### **1. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**

- We, the signing Member States, are aware of the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on families and children. We call for a particular focus on children and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion and for the related family policy efforts to be maintained and strengthened by adopting a multi-dimensional approach to tackling child poverty, namely, by reflecting on the framework proposed in the 2013 European Commission Recommendation on investing in children.

### **2. European Child Guarantee**

- Due to the current situation, tackling child poverty is more important than ever. Therefore, we welcome the announcement made by the EU Commission to present to the Council the announced Recommendation for a European Child Guarantee for negotiations, which we believe will provide new political prominence to this scheme and the necessary momentum for EU Member States to commit to tackling child poverty.
- The Child Guarantee should, namely, be based on the principles and integrated approach of the Commission's 2013 Investing in Children Recommendation and of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Access to free healthcare, free education, affordable early childhood education and care, decent housing and adequate nutrition is essential for children at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The Council Recommendation is to take into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children at risk of poverty or social exclusion and support related strategic investments and political developments in the Member States. It is crucial that the European Child Guarantee recognises the close correlation between parents participating in the labour market – in many cases single parents – and the economic stability of the families. Protection against family poverty is best guaranteed by parents being in employment.

- We call for a best practice exchange and for a continuous dialogue within Member States and the EU Commission – by including civil society – on measures to tackle child poverty effectively. This is to include measures that support parents' participation in, or their re-entry into, the labour market: by facilitating access for all to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality as well as flexible working arrangements. This could result in a higher labour market participation of both parents and better work-life balance.
- We call on the EU Commission to place a particular focus on children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the envisaged Strategy on the Rights of the Child. The rights of the child must be considered from a horizontal angle. Only in this way can it be ensured that every child has a fair chance to develop well and participate in society. Moreover, the implementation of the Child Guarantee should be underpinned and ensure coherence and complementarity with initiatives being undertaken or planned by the Commission, such as within its announced Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights.

### **3. EUROPE 2030 Strategy**

- In addition, we call on the EU Commission to present in the long term an ambitious and strong social dimension in the "Europe 2030 Strategy", improving the situation of children and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion. This European political strategy should be combined with improvements to the regular collection, analysis and monitoring of comparable data on child and family poverty in the EU. The social aspect of the Europe 2030 Strategy should incorporate the principles outlined in the European Pillar of Social Rights in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- We, the undersigned, undertake to participate actively in the implementation of the above-mentioned projects and call on the other Member States, EU bodies and institutions to support us in this endeavour.

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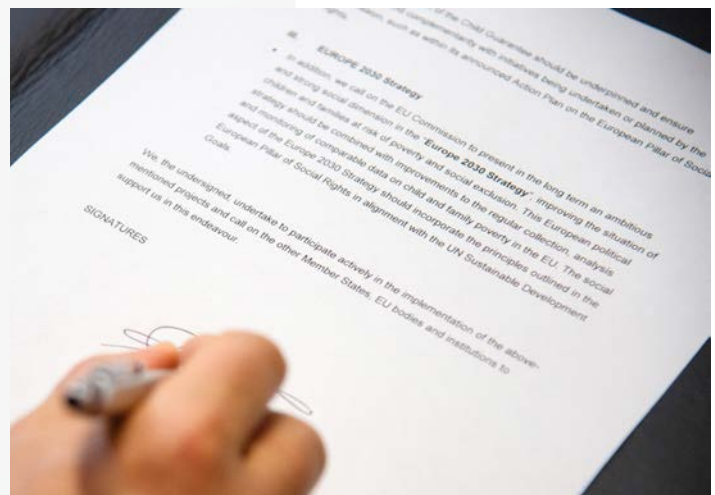
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