

P R E S S E M E L D U N G

CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY IN EUROPE FACE BLEAK FUTURE WITHOUT ACTION - SAVE THE CHILDREN

BRUSSELS, 27 October 2021 – The plight of millions of children living in poverty in Europe needs to be urgently addressed otherwise millions more children could be impacted as the COVID-19 pandemic takes its toll, reversing years of progress, according to a new report released by Save the Children today.

The organisation’s inaugural annual report on child poverty in Europe found that children across the region are facing unacceptable levels of poverty, with almost half of the children in Albania and one in every three children in Romania and Spain living below the poverty line.

New analysis from 14 European nations and territories – 9 EU and 5 non-EU states – showed that in Germany, one of the world’s wealthiest countries, one quarter of children are growing up at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In Italy, estimates show that 200,000 more children have been driven to extreme poverty in 2020.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, 18 million children – approximately 1 in every 4 – were growing up at risk of poverty or social exclusion across the EU. But estimates from Save the Children analysis show that this number will likely rise, with fears of substantial increases in family and children poverty across Europe beyond 2020 if action is not taken.

The only countries among 9 EU nations featured in the report to see a decrease in child poverty rates during the pandemic according to data available for 2020 were Denmark, Sweden and Lithuania. Data was not available from all 27 EU nations.

The report “*Guaranteeing Children’s Future -- How to End Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe*” called on national decision-makers in European countries to take full advantage of the available EU resources, such as the European Child Guarantee – Europe’s flagship programme to address child poverty – and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) which calls on EU Member States to allocate appropriate finances to address child poverty.

Anita Bay, Save the Children’s Europe Director, said:

“It is shocking to see poverty rates rising in Europe despite the EU’s commitment to invest in the next generation. Many member states still fall short of allocating adequate resources to ensure that all children have the right to an equal start in life.

“No child should go to school on an empty stomach, sleep in a cold bedroom, miss out on school trips with friends or worry about being evicted from their home because parents cannot pay rent. Even one child living in poverty is too much, but for millions of children across Europe this is the everyday reality, and the cost of inequality is becoming too high.

“We know that when children grow up poor, they are more likely to be poor as adults, and their children in turn too. By tackling child poverty, we can break the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage.”

Researchers found that children growing up in single-parent or large families, children with a migrant background, children with disabilities, children belonging to an ethnic minority, and children in rural or disadvantaged areas were among those most affected by poverty.

In Sweden, 58% of all families headed by a single parent with a foreign background are at risk of poverty, while in Italy families with at least 5 members and families with a migrant background suffered most from poverty.

In Germany, 45.2% of children receiving social benefits grow up in a single-parent family.

In Spain and the Netherlands, about 40% of children at risk of poverty come from working families, dispelling the myth that children grow up in poverty in families with unemployed parents.

The researchers also found that millions of children across Europe either do not have – or have limited access – to early education and care which was often of low quality. Millions struggle to eat a healthy meal each day, causing increased levels of child obesity or stunting. Children’s mental health is a key challenge in all countries. Housing deprivation, living in inadequate and overcrowded conditions, the risk of eviction is the everyday reality for most children facing poverty in Europe.

The new analysis highlighted the links between the role of essential services like childcare, education, healthcare or adequate housing in addressing poverty and social exclusion, and how the lack of access to these services can have adverse health and social consequences throughout children’s lives.

The EU has pledged to lift at least 5 million children out of poverty by 2030 and allocated 88 billion EUR in the 2021-2027 EU budget to tackle child poverty among other priorities.

Anita Bay said:

“We now need to swiftly harness the new Europe-wide anti-child poverty instruments to continue making important strides in achieving sustainable change for children.”

“At this critical moment, Save the Children hopes that the comprehensive evidence collected in this report will influence the Child Guarantee action plans so they do not serve only as the immediate answer to the crisis but will guarantee sustainable reforms providing a better future for current and next generations of children in an effective way.”

To improve the situation of children living in poverty and social exclusion in Europe, Save the Children is asking governments to take a comprehensive approach to tackling child poverty and:

- include adequate child poverty reduction measures in the Child Guarantee national action plans, promote and clearly outline the allocation of resources for addressing child poverty in these plans;
- set ambitious national targets for child poverty reduction, aiming to exceed the EU target of lifting 5 million children out of poverty by 2030;
- guarantee the sustainability of reforms, ensuring that the financial resources continue funding services in the long run.

Link to report:

https://www.savethechildren.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads_Dokumente/Berichte_Studien/2021/report_save_the_children_guaranteeing_Childrens_Future.pdf

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Notes to editors:

- For further information, see the report *‘Guaranteeing Children’s Future -- How to End Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe’*.
- Most figures are drawn from [Eurostat AROPE rates](#).
- The 14 European countries and territories included in the analysis were EU Member States Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Romania and non-EU Member States and territories Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Iceland and Northern Ireland.
- Data from surveys and research carried out in 2020-2021 in several countries (Sweden, Germany, Spain, Lithuania, Romania, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina) by different national and international organizations (Bertelsmann Foundation, Save the Children, World Bank, UNICEF, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner) were also used in the report.
- Although the report also covers the non-EU Member States, for which new EU anti-poverty instruments are not relevant, Save the Children considers the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation as an exemplary policy framework that can be used as a basis for policy making in countries outside the EU and therefore provides recommendations for child poverty reduction measures in these countries too.

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben, frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.