

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

for the
“EUROPEAN CHILD GUARANTEE”



SEPTEMBER 2022

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PREAMBLE

This Action Plan is elaborated in response to the Recommendation on the European Child Guarantee¹, which aims to ensure that “every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to the most basic of rights like healthcare and education”². Supporting children since their first steps and throughout childhood is of paramount importance for building a sustainable, balanced, inclusive and competitive economy of knowledge and a fair society.

The Recommendation specifies Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (“Childcare and Support to Children”), while the Action Plan allows a coherent and universal implementation of the above principle, which so far is only taken into consideration in specific National Strategies.

According to the Explanatory Memorandum to the Recommendation³, “No child should be left behind. The demographic trends and skills shortages, highlighted in the Commission’s report on the impact of demographic change⁴, adopted on 17 June 2020, make it indispensable to foster the potential of the young generations, regardless of their socio-economic background. Preventing and combating social exclusion of children is essential for social progress and sustainable development. Social exclusion has damaging effects on the present and future opportunities of children and on their capacity to contribute to today’s and tomorrow’s society. Poor education and health also have an important economic and labour market impact as they hinder the employment growth and lead to a lower-quality and less-productive workforce”.

In addition, the intergenerational transmission of social exclusion jeopardises social cohesion and entails higher costs for the welfare state, undermining economic and social resilience. Improving equal access of children in need to key services is therefore an important means of stepping up efforts to prevent and combat social exclusion. It also contributes to fostering equal opportunities for children in need and combating child poverty. Tackling a child’s disadvantages from early years is a cost-effective investment, including from a long-term perspective, as it contributes not only to the inclusion of children and their higher socioeconomic outcomes when they are adults, but also to the economy and society through better integration into the labour market and social life (recitals 18 & 19 of the above Recommendation).

The Greek Government fully adopted the aforementioned values and legacies of the EU and has, thus, placed the child poverty issue very high in its political agenda; acknowledging the need to take all appropriate and necessary measures, it has given the Recommendation the force of law, introducing by article 53 of L. 4837/2021 (Government

¹ Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee (OJ L 223 22.06.2021, p. 14 <https://beta.op.europa.eu/el/publication-detail/-/publication/1936f4dd-d2f3-11eb-ac72-01aa75ed71a1>)

² Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_el.pdf

³ Explanatory Memorandum of the Council Recommendation (24.3.2021 COM(2021) 137 final, 2021/0070(NLE) http://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/cc910770-8d87-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1.0015.03/DOC_1

⁴ Report on the impact of demographic change, European Commission, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/report-impact-demographic-change-reader-friendly-version-0_en

Gazette A 178/1.10.2021) a new innovative European Institution, the Guarantee for combating child poverty and social exclusion.

Furthermore, during a public event on the European Child Guarantee held on 07/06/2022, the President of the Hellenic Republic, the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs and representatives of Parliament met with children in need and listened to their concerns.

Consultation has been ensured through a national, regional and local Network, with participation of around 400 representatives of local authorities, university departments, independent authorities, civil society agencies and non-government organizations, in order to identify the categories of children in need, as well as the barriers in accessing key services. In parallel, children's voice, as heard through consultation with focus groups and by survey via structured questionnaires, has contributed to formulating the National Action Plan.

Moreover, the establishment of a Network, as an independent body, will allow to evaluate the implementation of the European Recommendation by defined quantitative and qualitative targets and respective indicators. A special digital electronic database will be populated with up-to-date data (infohub) by the certified bodies of the Network across the country. The fight against child poverty and social exclusion, along with mitigation of the adverse socioeconomic effects due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, including the energy crisis and the implications of the migration flow from the war zone of Ukraine, require a comprehensive and multidimensional approach, as well a support policy framework to tackle the barriers faced by children.

The member states are recommended: first, to guarantee for children in need access to: early childhood education and care, education, healthcare, healthy nutrition and adequate housing; second, to identify children in need; and third, to take into account, wherever appropriate in designing their national integrated measures, specific disadvantages experienced by: a) homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation, b) children with disabilities, c) children with mental health issues, d) children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin and Roma children, e) children in alternative and institutional care, f) children in precarious family situations.

Based on the thematic sections suggested by the Recommendation, this Action Plan is structured in eleven (11) Sections. Following the short presentation of the National Framework in Section 1, Sections 2 and 6 present the institution of the National Coordinator, as well as the organizational scheme of the NAP elaboration. Sections 3 to 5 identify the categories of children in need and the barriers they face in accessing key services. The quantitative and qualitative targets of the NAP, the actions (current and planned) for fulfilment of these targets, as well as the support framework for a coherent and comprehensive policy are reflected consecutively in Sections 7 to 9. Section 10 refers to the EU sources of funding for the NAP actions. Finally, Section 11 refers specifically to the methodology for monitoring the implementation indicators and the elaboration of a relevant study, to be conducted under the financing program of the "European Technical Support Instrument" (TSI 2022), which shall also determine the establishment and details of the administrative scheme for monitoring and evaluation of the National Action Plan (NAP).

1. NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR TACKLING CHILD POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

In recent years, significant progress has been made in social protection measures for children in Greece, while at the same time a wide range of policies have been put in place to support⁵ low-income and vulnerable families on the basis of the guidelines of the European Pillar of Social Rights. However, a uniform, long-term and, above all, targeted strategic approach is needed to combat child poverty and social exclusion, taking into account the multidimensional nature of child poverty.

The provision and incorporation of specific child protection actions in National Strategic texts and Action Plans⁶, though important, is not a global and holistic approach, as the relevant measures are spread across national documents, making it difficult to ensure appropriate interaction and coordination between social policy sectors. The preparation of the N.A.P. in the context of the European Child Guarantee is a great opportunity to elaborate a respective National Strategy to improve substantively the current situation in the field of child protection with a horizon by 2030.

The starting point and the key objective of the National Strategy is the protection of children, their rights and, by extension, their family environment. To achieve this central goal, the National Strategy should aim at establishing a single, long-term, coherent and effective planning as regards policies for the protection of children and families.

The process of preparing the NAP highlighted the following key principles for elaboration of the National Strategy for the Child:

- a) promote and defend children's rights and the principle of the best interest of the child,
- b) ensure that every child in Greece will have access to adequate financial resources and services to safeguard their wellbeing in the present and the future (thus taking into account the multidimensional nature of child poverty),
- c) ensure that the specific needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of children are taken into account to ensure their equal participation in the country's economic and social life,

⁵ See Section 9 (Supporting Policy Framework)

⁶ i) National Action Plan on the Rights of Children (2021-2023)

ii) National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

iii) National Strategy and Action Plan for De-institutionalization

iv) National strategy for social integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection

v) Action Plan to Combat Energy Poverty

vi) Action Plan to Combat Energy Poverty (2021 – 2030)

vii) National Plan against Racism and Intolerance

viii) National Strategy for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors

ix) Greece's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security (2020-2024)

x) National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2025

xi) National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (2021-2027)

xii) National Action Plan on Public Health (2021-2025)

d) ensure coherence, adequacy and effectiveness of policies and actions in the long term, and

e) information and participation of all stakeholders, Civil Society, as well as children, on all policies that concern them, in view of identifying the real gaps and needs.

The process of preparing the NAP also highlighted the following key pillars in terms of a National Strategy for the Child:

a) ensure adequate living standards for all children in view of combating child poverty,

b) ensure access of all children to essential services (early childhood care, education, housing, health and good-quality and adequate nutrition) in view of promoting the physical, mental and social wellbeing of children based on equal opportunities,

c) combat all sorts of discrimination, inequalities and prejudice (for example discrimination based on origin, religion, language, disability, physical and mental health status, gender and sexual orientation)

d) protect children against all forms of violence or exploitation,

e) provide equal opportunities for leisure activities and support the development of social relations among children and adolescents, taking also into account the particularities of the digital era.

The National Action Plan (NAP) for the Child Guarantee is the first comprehensive and consistent effort at national level to combat child poverty and social exclusion, focusing on children.

It includes exclusively targeted measures and systemic actions that support children and parents (or guardians) to access resources and quality services. At the same time, it is in synergy with the current national strategies and action plans, related to the reduction of child poverty, with a view to ensuring coherence and interconnection between them, monitoring and assessment of the impact of measures on child poverty, improving complementarity in the implementation of the relevant actions and reducing fragmentation and overlaps.

However, it is noted that the National Action Plan (NAP) is dynamic in nature: it provides for targeted non-exhaustive measures by category of service, allowing for necessary amendments and/or addition of new interventions at the time of its review to ensure its timely adaptation to the current socio-economic needs for the benefit of children in need.

In this context, a stable administrative monitoring and evaluation mechanism is needed, allowing for cross-sectoral analysis, linkage and synergy of measures, in order to make it easier to measure their impact on reducing child poverty. Filling of these gaps, along with a more accurate collection and use of relevant data, will facilitate the identification and diagnosis of needs, the updating of the design and evaluation of public policies and the efficient allocation of financial resources. Thus, it will be possible to respond to the challenge of assessing the effectiveness and impact of the actions carried out at national level, in view of implementing coordinated mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the progress in implementation of the relevant measures.

2. NATIONAL CHILD GUARANTEE COORDINATOR

2.1. Legal framework: Mandate - responsibilities and resources of the National Child Guarantee Coordinator

The National Center for Social Solidarity (E.K.K.A.) was nominated as the National Child Guarantee Coordinator by article 53 L.4837/2021 Gazette A 178/1.10.2021 (see *Annex^j*) in the context of its institutional mission described in its Organization⁷.

The mission of the National Child Guarantee Coordinator is: elaboration and preparation of the National Action Plan, effective coordination and monitoring of the implementation of EU Recommendation 2021/1004 and the Action Plan, as well as the monitoring, supervision and evaluation of the actions integrated into the National Action Plan⁸.

The following regulatory acts are listed below, because of their direct relevance to the NAP:

1. Joint Ministerial Decision on: Designation of representatives and their alternates as liaisons with E.K.K.A. as National Child Guarantee Coordinator, in application of par. 2a of art. 59 of L. 4837/2021 (GG YOΔΔ 30/21.01.2022, ANNEX ⁱⁱ).
2. Ministerial Decision on: Establishment and Composition of a Working Group consisting of officials from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the National Center for Social Solidarity (E.K.K.A.) to implement the Recommendation on the European Child Guarantee and the National Action Plan (article 59 par. 2 of Law 4837/2021, ΑΔΑ: 9ΙΘ546ΜΤΑΚ-ΓΨΟ, ANNEX ⁱⁱⁱ).

The entire staff of E.K.K.A.'s competent unit is the human potential of the National Coordinator. Moreover, for a limited period, 2 technical advisors of UNICEF, 3 technical advisors from IOBE (the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research) and 2 scientific partners from the National Institute of Labour & Human Resources (EIEAD/NILHR) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs⁹ assist the work of the National Coordinator and its team. The financial resources for the operation of the National Coordinator's office come from the ordinary budget and specifically the budget of E.K.K.A.. Furthermore, the operational and administrative capacity of the National Coordinator, at the stage of implementation of the National Action Plan, is supported under the ESF+ operational program "Human Resources Development and Social Cohesion", which has received the respective approval of the operational program from the EU.

⁷ <https://ekka.org.gr/index.php/el/rolos-skopos-tou-ekka>. E.K.K.A. is an independent Legal Entity governed by Public Law, based in Athens, which is supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (pd 22/7-2-2006, GG A 18 as amended by pd 41/23-06-2021, GG A 103). Its institutional mission is to deal effectively with situations of social emergency, social exclusion and crisis (article 48 L. 4554/2018 (GG A' 130).

⁸ The tasks of the National Coordinator are described in detail in ANNEX I

⁹ EIEAD came under the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs by L.4921/GG 75/A/18-04-22.

2.2. Overall coordination and monitoring structure (at regional and local level)

E.K.K.A is the body coordinating the various Public Authorities responsible for policy-making in this field at national, regional and local level. The National Coordinator shall cooperate with national and EU authorities and bodies, international organizations for the protection of children, non-governmental organizations and civil society actors, to identify children in need and the barriers they face.

To implement the EU Recommendation on the European Child Guarantee, both at the level of the initial design of the NAP, as well as at the level of coordination and monitoring and at the subsequent stages of its implementation, it was considered crucial that a network of representatives of the stakeholders be set up first. A detailed description of the process of cooperation and coordination between the participating actors of the network and the National Coordinator is given in Section 6.2.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN IN NEED AND BARRIERS THEY FACE IN ACCESSING SERVICES

The purpose of this Section is to identify children in need in Greece and the barriers they face in accessing five (5) key areas of services essential for the children's wellbeing, including: (a) early childhood education and care, (b) education, school and extra-curricular activities (c) health care, (d) healthy nutrition and (e) adequate housing.

"Children in need" are all persons under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. According to the Recommendation for the European Child Guarantee (ECG), when identifying children in need, it is crucial to especially take into account the barriers to access faced by six (6) specific groups of vulnerable children, including: (a) homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation, b) children with disabilities, c) children with mental health issues, d) children with a migration/refugee background, of minority ethnic origin and Roma children, e) children living in institutions, and f) children in precarious family situations¹⁰.

(All charts and tables of section 3 are incorporated in the attached ANNEX ^{iv}).

3.1. Children in need because of risk of poverty or social exclusion

According to recent EU-SILC data for 2021¹¹, 32% of children (under 18 years old) in Greece lived in households experiencing poverty or social exclusion. The rate has increased compared to the previous year, a fact which can be attributed to the impact of restrictive measures adopted to contain the spread of the pandemic (as

¹⁰ These are children exposed to risk factors that could lead to poverty or social exclusion. These factors include: living in a single-income household, living with a parent with disability, living in a household where there are mental health problems or long-term illness, substance abuse or domestic violence. It also concerns children of an EU citizen who has moved to another Member State while the children have stayed in their Member State of origin, children who have a teenage mother or are themselves teenage mothers and children who have a parent in prison.

¹¹ Based on the definition of the EU 2030 Strategy

EU-SILC results for 2021 are based on 2020 incomes)¹². The percentage of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Greece has decreased significantly compared to 2015 (by 5.7 percentage points) but still remains higher compared to the pre-crisis period (2008: 28.7%¹³). The risk of poverty or social exclusion is higher amongst children aged 12-17 (34.9% or 233,000 children), compared to 33% (or 209,000 children) amongst children aged 6-11, while the lowest percentage (26.7% or 135,000 children) is observed amongst children under 6 years of age (see Annex IV, Chart 3.1).

At the same time, the highest risk of poverty is for single parents (49.3%), followed by families of two adults with three or more children (39.4%) and three or more adults with dependent children (36.5%), while the lowest percentage is for families of two adults with one dependent child (25.7%) (see Annex IV, Chart 3.2).

In particular, the risk of poverty faced by single parents is linked to the sub-indicator of serious material deprivation (28.2% of single-parent households). Severe material deprivation rates are significantly lower when households have fewer members or have no dependent children (see Annex IV, Chart 3.3).

Furthermore, according to Eurostat data for 2019, 12% of children up to the age of 18 in Greece were living in households with low work intensity, against 8.2% in EU. Moreover, 7.8% of children in Greece were living in households where no member at working age was working, compared to 9% in EU27.

3.2. Specific categories of children in need

3.2.1. Homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation

Homeless children are those living on the street, in accommodation structures for the homeless, as well as those living in inadequate housing¹⁴. In Greece, there is insufficient data on the number of homeless people in general and homeless children in particular¹⁵. In May 2018, a pilot attempt was made by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to register homeless people in 7 (seven) Municipalities in the country, where 1,645 homeless people were identified, 24.2% of whom were young people up to the age of 29. According to the statistics (*July 2022*) of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the estimated number of unaccompanied minors in Greece is 2,010, of whom 1,896 are living in various shelters¹⁶. The National Emergency Response Mechanism for unaccompanied minors in precarious living conditions put in place two helplines in April 2021 and started housing unaccompanied minors in June of the same year. Until February 2022, it had received 5,312 calls concerning 3,434 different cases of unaccompanied minors, 2,754 of which concerned housing

¹² Increases are also observed in other European countries (indicatively, Spain, Italy, Austria, Hungary) based on the most recent survey results, while countries such as Belgium or Finland even managed to reduce their rates during the same period (at the time of writing, results were not yet available for all 27 EU countries).

¹³ Based on the definition of the EU 2020 Strategy

¹⁴ Definition given in Law 4052/2012, article 29, par. 1 & 2.

¹⁵ Further, the causes of child homelessness are unknown, nor has the impact of the 10-year crisis on the rates and risk of child homelessness been explored (UNICEF, 2021).

¹⁶ <https://migration.gov.gr/asynodeyta-anilika-stoicheia-ioylioy-2022/>

requests, 475 legal assistance, and 205 other matters¹⁷. In addition, in the four-month period March - June 2022 the hotline has received referrals for 430 minors from Ukraine separated from their families.

Given that homelessness occurs as a consequence of inability to meet financial obligations or other adverse conditions, it is crucial to capture the following two elements. Firstly, the very high rate (84% for 2020) of children at risk of poverty live in households with an excessive burden of housing expenditure, for which the total cost of housing is more than 40% of the disposable income, while children aged 6 to 11 are in the worst position. These rates show a very significant deviation from the EU27 average (see Annex IV, Table 3.1).

Second, as regards housing conditions, single-parent families (12.8%) and families with 3 or more children (11.5%) face a higher risk of severe housing deprivation (living in overcrowded conditions and lacking at least one basic amenity), with the proportion of the former having doubled in the last five years. The same two categories of households are to a large extent unable to ensure adequate heating. In particular, from the total number of poor households with children unable to pay for adequate heating (38.9%), single-parent households unable to pay for adequate heating are 42.5% and families with 3 or more children are 36.3%, with these rates being more than twice as high as the EU27 average (see Annex IV, Table 3.2). Moreover, there is difficulty in paying rent and/or inability to pay public utilities, especially for single-parent and large families, with large deviations from the EU27 average.

3.2.2. Children with disabilities

In Greece, the administrative registration of children with disabilities only concerns those who meet the criteria to become beneficiaries of disability allowances. Moreover, the fact that the receipt of disability allowances is not dependent on income but on medical criteria makes it particularly difficult to quantitatively link child disability and child poverty¹⁸. Subject to this reservation, 18,607 children were beneficiaries of disability allowances in Greece in December 2021 (OPEKA data). Moreover, according to the National Confederation of People with Disabilities (NCDP), the number of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs attending mainstream and special primary and secondary schools in Greece were 109,020 in the school year 2019-2020.

Annex IV of this Section, Chart 3.5 and Table 3.3 present detailed data from the EU-SILC ad hoc survey for 2017 (health of children under 16), data from the pilot questionnaire of the National Health Survey for 2019 (children aged 2-14), as well as estimates from the 2019 National Health Survey (children aged 15-17). All the above figures indicate limitations in children's activities in Greece due to health problems

¹⁷ National Emergency Response Mechanism of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors under the Ministry for Migration and Asylum. See [Helplines 2132128888 & 6942773030 \(without charge\) of the National Emergency Response Mechanism | Ministry of Migration and Asylum \(migration.gov.gr\)](https://www.migration.gov.gr/en/hotline).

¹⁸ A similar lack of data is also observed at European level, where available household surveys (EU-SILC, Health Survey) focus on people aged above 15 or 16, and concern wider health problems that are not necessarily identified with disabilities; as a result, the percentage of children with disabilities cannot be reflected on an annual basis.

close to 2% (an estimated 40,000 children), although it should be noted that the limitation on activities, as recorded in these surveys, is not identified with disability.

3.2.3. Children with mental health issues

Similar to children with disabilities, it is difficult to find adequate and reliable statistics on children with mental health issues in Greece, and there are also problems arising from the lack of consistent definitions.

The specific questionnaire of the National Health Survey for 2019 on children's health included a number of questions on the mental health of children aged 2-14. According to these data, 0.2% of children of this age suffer from depression, while 15.2% of children have anxiety, nervousness or apprehension at least once a week (see Annex IV, Table 3.5). Moreover, the National Health Survey provides some information on a set of variables that reflect poor mental health symptoms at adolescents aged 15-17, although the sample is quite small. These data show that 7.1% of adolescents aged 15-17 reported at least one (1) symptom of poor mental health for several days in the last two weeks in 2019 (see Annex IV, Table 3.6).

3.2.4. Children with a migrant background, refugee children and Roma children

According to ELSTAT estimates for the country's population in 2020¹⁹, around 94% of children aged 0-19 were born in Greece and the remaining 6% in other States (or 130,488 children). Also, 87.4% of children up to 19 years old have Greek citizenship and 12.6% are foreign citizens (see Annex IV, Table 3.8). In addition, it is estimated that 44,500 refugee and migrant children were in Greece in September 2020 (UNICEF). According to the official statistics (*July 2020*) of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the number of unaccompanied children in Greece is 2,010.

Since the second half of 2022, the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity & Fight against Poverty of the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs, as the entity in charge of planning, monitoring and evaluating the Roma integration policies, has been processing the results of the registration of the country's Roma settlements and population, conducted in 2021 via the Municipalities. According to the registration, a total number of 462 Roma living areas are reported, with a total population of around 117,495 persons²⁰. Children aged up to 15 are estimated to account for around 34.4% of the total (or approximately 40,421 Roma children). Moreover, the percentage of Roma children enrolled in early childhood education corresponds to 8.64% and in compulsory education 66.42%. Finally, the acute phenomenon of early marriages is observed.

A 2012 study of the Council of Europe reports a number of 175,000 Roma people in Greece²¹.

In addition, in the context of the 2021 Population-Housing Census, there has been systematic cooperation between the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity & Fight against Poverty of the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs and the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)²² and it was attempted for the first time to enumerate the camps

¹⁹ The results of the 2021 population census have not yet been finalized and reflected. The previous population census in Greece had taken place in 2011.

²⁰ The analysis of the registration data is in progress.

²¹ Council of Europe (2012), "Estimates and official numbers of Roma in Europe", updated on 2 July 2012.

²² The publication of the results of the 2021 population-housing census of ELSTAT is expected by the end of 2022.

where Roma live, by special enumerators, with the assistance of Roma people from local communities.

3.2.5. Children in institutional care and accommodation

This category includes children in child protection and care facilities and some of the unaccompanied children living in accommodation centers, with a capacity of 16-40 places, an average of 27.5 accommodation places (or in alternative care). The National Register of Minors kept by E.K.K.A. includes 1,477 children who are staying in a total of ninety-four (94) child protection structures. Of those, one hundred and forty-two (142) children are disabled and the respective structures they live in are nine (9)²³.

Moreover, there are 2,010 unaccompanied children in Greece. Of these, 1,525 live in shelters, 212 in assisted living apartments, 159 in emergency accommodation facilities, 95 in Reception and Identification Centers and 19 in open accommodation centers (*Ministry of Migration and Asylum data: July 2022*²⁴). Seventy-one (71) unaccompanied minors up to 12 years of age, living in ten (10) shelters, have also been integrated into the National Foster Care and Adoption System²⁵, with the aim of their family rehabilitation or their rehabilitation in alternative forms of care. In the next stage, the integration of unaccompanied minors, aged 12+ to 15 years old, into the National Foster Care and Adoption System is being prepared, with the aim of increasing this number as part of the country's efforts for the deinstitutionalization of children.

3.2.6. Children in precarious family situations

Children living with an adult with disabilities/ mental illness/ long-term illness/ substance abuse

In the absence of administrative data, Table 3.10 in Annex IV presents estimates on the percentage of households in Greece where children up to 14 years of age live with at least one adult with physical or mental health problems, such as limitation to activities due to health problems (23.2%), existence of long-term illness (4.1%), diagnosed depression (0.8%) or general symptoms of poor psychological condition (21.1%). The survey from which the relevant estimates are derived (National Health Survey) does not contain a drug use variable.

Children victims of domestic violence

According to the aggregate statistical data of the national SOS help line for children (1056) from The Smile of the Child, there have been 884 named and anonymous reports of all sorts of violence for 1,559 children in Greece for 2021. In the first half of 2022, there have been 557 named and anonymous reports of abuse and neglect for 964 children²⁶. In 2021, E.K.K.A.'s National Child Protection Helpline (1107)

²³ Data and figures of the IT system www.anynet.gr (2nd quarter of 2022)

²⁴ www.migration.gov.gr

²⁵ Data from www.anynet.gr

²⁶ For 2021: <https://www.hamogelo.gr/gr/el/ta-nea-mas/to-chamogelo-tou-paidiou-to-2021-stirikse-48403-paidia-kai-tis-oikogeneies-tous/>

recorded 74 calls for child-related incidents (21 for domestic violence, 21 for neglect, 21 for abuse, 5 for sexual abuse and 6 for violence). Moreover, 257 calls to E.K.K.A.'s Emergency Social Assistance Helpline (197) were recorded concerning incidents of violence against women or abuse of women (without specifying whether children were involved in each call/incident). In the first half of 2022, E.K.K.A.'s National Child Protection Helpline (1107) received 21 anonymous reports for child abuse-neglect, which were forwarded to the competent Public Prosecutor's Offices for Minors. According to the Epidemiological Surveillance of Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) of the Institute of Child Health²⁷ (June 2021 – mid July 2022), 128 incidents were recorded involving children aged from ≤1 month – 18.2 years. As for the type of CAN, 66.4% of the incidents involved one or more forms of neglect, 48.4% had to do with psychological/emotional abuse, 28.9% physical abuse, 6.25% sexual abuse and 3.9% self-harming.

Children of underage mothers/ underage mothers

According to ELSTAT data, 2,347 children were born to mothers up to 20 years old in Greece in 2020, with 113 babies were born to girls under the age of 15 (see Annex IV, Chart 3.11). Also, according to Eurostat data for 2020, 750 underage girls (10-18 years old) became first-time mothers in Greece in 2019, with 106 being under the age of 15²⁸.

Children with imprisoned parents

According to data from the Council of Europe Recommendation on the rights of children with imprisoned parents (2018), it is estimated that there are around 1.2 million children in Europe whose parents are serving sentences in detention facilities. According to estimates by the pan-European network "Children of Prisoners Europe" (COPE) there are around 14,000 children in Greece with an imprisoned father and about 650 children with an imprisoned mother²⁹.

3.2.7. Underage prisoners

According to data (18/07/2022) of the Ministry of Citizen Protection (General Secretariat of Anti-crime Policy), 28 minors were detained (24 in the Corinth Prison and 4 in the Women's prison of Eleonas, Thebe) and 7 children within prison aged from 1 month to three years³⁰.

For 2022: <https://www.hamogelo.gr/gr/el/ta-nea-mas/to-chamogelo-tou-paidiou-stirikse-38710-paidia-kai-tis-oikogeneies-tous-to-arsquo-eksamino-tou-2022/>

²⁷ Regarding the pilot trial of the CAN-MDS system,

see [http://www.can-via-mds.eu/sites/default/files/D5.6 Greece Policy%20recommendations 0.pdf](http://www.can-via-mds.eu/sites/default/files/D5.6%20Greece%20Policy%20recommendations%200.pdf)

²⁸ See https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=demo_fordagec&lang=en

²⁹ Extrapolations by the network (as well as by the Council of Europe) for all European countries are based methodologically on an earlier survey carried out in France (Champsaur et al., 2002) which found a parenting rate of 1.3 among male prisoners. Based on the parenting rate among prisoners and the latest statistics on the number of prisoners from the Ministry of Justice, children of imprisoned parents are estimated by the authors at approximately 13,200, which is quite close to the above extrapolations. However, the characteristics of the prison population may vary widely from country to country, thus the parenting rate among prisoners may also vary.

³⁰For more information:

http://www.mopocp.gov.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&perform=view&id=7055&Itemid=696&lang=GR

3.3. Barriers in accessing services

3.3.1. Early childhood education and care

Early childhood education and care in Greece is distinguished into non-compulsory early childhood care (ECC), for kids aged 0-4, and compulsory early childhood education (ECE) for kids aged 4-5. ECC is provided by public and private structures under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (private structures) and Municipalities (public structures). As Municipalities are encouraged, but they are not obliged to have ECC centers, it is still difficult to assess reliable data at national level. In 2020, around 1 out of 2 children aged 0-3 (47.5%) did not receive formal ECC, with large variations of the percentage across the different Regions (see Annex IV, Chart 3.7). The intensity of formal care provision for children under 3 in Greece is also low, with only 10.4% of children of this age receiving at least 30 hours/week of care compared to 19.5% in the EU (Annex IV, Table 3.12). As far as ECE is concerned, according to Eurostat data for 2020, enrolment is as high as 90.3%, which is lower than the EU average (95.4%)³¹ but partly due to the recent extension of the age bracket (*from 5 to 4 years old*).

The factors hindering access to ECC are primarily structural and consist, first, in the lack of availability (*insufficient places in public structures, geographical distance*), inability to cover the cost, and limited working hours (*often prohibitive for working parents*). In their entirety, structural barriers to access are directly linked to the absence of central planning and uniform rules, resulting in practice to differentiated access terms depending on the Municipality (*for example: fees, prioritization of applications, etc.*).

The fact that Municipalities are not obliged to establish and operate a minimum fixed number of centers, generates inconsistencies in the coverage of needs across the country. An additional disincentive concerns the transportation cost, which affects disproportionately children from low-income households, as well as children living in remote areas, Roma camps or accommodation structures for asylum-seekers. In addition to the financial obstacles, the last two groups of children are faced with further administrative obstacles, due to the lack of the required documents. **Children with disabilities** are also faced with structural barriers to access, namely the lack of qualified staff³² which is one of the main challenges along with the inability to physically access the premises, given also the lack of data on the technical compliance of structures with the relevant requirements.

In connection to the structural barriers, but also with a distinct cultural character, families in Greece with young children up to the age of 3 tend to resort also to informal childcare, such as assistance from members of the wider family (*e.g. grandparents or other relatives*) or friends or employment of domestic staff who often combine childcare with housework; as a result, children do not receive expert and good-quality early childhood care, as reflected in the EU Council

³¹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/educ_uoe_enra10/default/table?lang=en

³² Art. 48, L. 4647/2019 “support for the child suffering from physical, mental, psychological illnesses or disabilities may also be provided by a special aid – attendant made available by the child's family, upon request of the parent or guardian”, shifting the cost to the children's families and actually resulting in inability to enroll. It is pointed out that the relevant institutional framework on provision of assistance staff is governed by L. 3699/2008, while L.4823/2021 has also introduced additional favorable provisions.

Recommendation of 14 May 2019 (*“High quality early Childhood Education and Care systems”*).

3.3.2. Education and extracurricular activities

Participation in compulsory education in Greece is high, at 98.5% for primary education and 96.7% for secondary education³³. Dropout rates are low in primary school (1.79% in the first three grades of elementary school, 1.54% in the other three grades of elementary school) and senior high school (1.65%) and well higher for the day vocational senior high-school (8.94%). Although there is insufficient data on the socio-economic background of school leavers, the dropout is likely to be related to the (low) family income.³⁴ It is indicative that dropout is more common for pupils in public schools than pupils in private schools (*ELSTAT data*).

The barriers to access to primary and secondary education are divided into general and special ones, i.e. seen in specific groups of children. A general barrier is the high private expenditure of households for out-of-school educational support of pupils (coaching schools, private tutoring) and foreign language learning. This generates inequality in the educational and professional prospects of pupils with low socioeconomic background, and a disincentive for substantive improvement of the services provided by the public education system.

Special barriers to access are faced by Roma children, children from migrant and refugee families and children with disabilities. It is more likely for Roma children to leave school, not enroll and live in poor households³⁵. In 2016, only 28% of Roma children attended pre-school education, while Greece had the lowest rate of Roma children enrollment in compulsory education among nine countries in a relevant survey, with 69% compared to the average of 90%³⁶. In particular for Roma teenagers, low attendance is mainly explained by the need to support family income and early marriages. **Children with refugee or migrant backgrounds** recorded high rates of enrolment and attendance in education during the school year 2021-2022 as a result of coordinated policies put forward by the Ministry of Education and Religions³⁷.

The Ministry of Education has been implementing numerous policies for full inclusion of refugee and migrant children in the Greek education system. The coordinated policies of the Ministry have resulted to higher rates of refugee children enrolment (up to 95% - 16,417 students) and attendance (75% - 12,285 students).

³³ Early childhood education (ECE) for children aged 4-5 years, although mandatory, has already been discussed in the previous Section (3.3.1.), in the context of Early Childhood Care and Education.

³⁴ Institute for Education Policy (2019), School dropout in Greek primary and secondary education – reference period 2014-2017, page 8.

³⁵ In Europe, a 2014 study estimated that 90% of Roma lived in a household below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2018).

³⁶ Research by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, indirect source from UNICEF, 2021. Regarding the geographical differentiation of the school dropout of Roma children, see also 2019 Study conducted by the Institute of Education Policy under the Ministry of Education. The study concludes that in the period 2014-2017 the dropout rate of junior-high school pupils in Western Attica (where Roma families live in a large concentration) has been the highest in the country, 11.6% against 4.6% for the country as a whole.

³⁷ See Press release of the Ministry of Education and Religions <https://www.minedu.gov.gr/ekpaideusi/refug-educ>

Moreover, according to the data recorded by the Ministry of Migration & Asylum (February 2022), 120 refugee children with disabilities or/and special educational needs aged 5-18 attend schools in our country: 39 unaccompanied children with disabilities or/and special educational needs and 81 children with disabilities or/and special educational needs staying in apartments or open accommodation structures. However, several barriers have been identified in terms of access to education for children living in Reception and Identification Centers (RICs), in relation to the lack of places, short-staffing, as well as the reluctance of schools or local societies over the massive integration of students in the educational structures (Ombudsman 2021)³⁸.

Children with disabilities³⁹ are faced with two main barriers: access and staff. The first mainly affects children with physical disabilities and may relate to the physical access to school facilities, as well as the partial lack of adapted material and supporting equipment⁴⁰. The second difficulty is the lack of qualified teachers and staff, particularly in rural and remote areas and islands, despite the hiring of 4,500 special education teachers in the last years, who were allocated across the country. This is particularly important to support the integration of pupils with disabilities in the mainstream education system. Finally, there is a lack of adapted learning support and material, as well as implementation of inclusive education programs. **Children living in institutional care**⁴¹ are faced with barriers to participation in education, due to study gaps or higher educational needs and difficulties. Finally, a major obstacle lies in the distance from schools, in particular for **children in remote/inaccessible areas** and in the context of shortcomings in the current institutional framework of pupil transportation⁴².

³⁸ Ombudsman (2021), Report on: "Educational integration of children living in structures and RICs of the Ministry of Migration & Asylum".

³⁹ In the absence of official data on children with disabilities who are completely excluded from access to education, it is estimated that the number of pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs attending general and special primary and secondary schools is 109,020, accounting for 7% of the country's school population (Source: 10th statistical information Release "Data on the education of pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs" published by the Disability Observatory of the National Confederation of People with Disabilities NCDP).

⁴⁰ In the last decade, especially under the Program "Global Planning for Learning", a plethora of accessible material has been developed: transcription of all the existing Primary and Secondary Education textbooks into Braille by ITYE Diophantos and adaptation of all textbooks from primary school to senior high-school to different fonts for visually impaired pupils, adaptation of books for pupils and teachers in digital accessible format and easy-to-read form for deaf pupils, pupils with autism and mentally retarded (the books have been adapted by the IEP under the project "Design and development of accessible educational material for pupils with disabilities"), development of the first multimedia material for teaching of the Greek sign-language in kindergarten and the first two grades of elementary school, as well as of educational software for different categories of disability, under the aforementioned project. Concerning the supply of equipment, the Ministry for Education and Religions responds to disabled pupils' requests and provides them with free supporting technology (desktops/laptops Braille technology, special software etc) upon relevant recommendation by KESY, in view of providing reasonable adaptations to facilitate digital accessibility.

⁴¹ Special Report of the Greek Ombudsman, "From the institution to community: alternative care of vulnerable children and support of families", 2020, <https://www.noesi.gr/book/eidiki-ekthesi-stp-idryma-stin-koinotita-enallaktiki-frontida-eyaloton-paidion-kai-ypostirixi>

⁴² The transportation of pupils falls within the competence of the Regions, JMD 50025/19-9-2018 (GG 4217/B/26-9-2018). The problems are mainly related to the shortage of urban or interurban public transport, the public procurement procedure, the way and amount of reimbursement to the parents.

3.3.3. Healthcare

Despite the generally good health status of children in Greece⁴³, the percentage of children reporting unmet medical care needs based on EU-SILC of 2017 (2.4%) is higher than the European average (1.6%). In the same year, the gap to the European average in terms of children's unmet dental needs was even greater (4.4% compared to 2.6% in EU27). There are also large inequalities based on household income, with poorer children reporting more than double the rate of unmet medical needs (see Annex IV, Table 3.14), while large income inequalities are also observed in the access to dental care (see Annex IV, Table 3.15⁴⁴).

A general barrier to equal access to healthcare is the **level of private expenditure**, especially direct household expenditure. The latter remains more than a third of total health expenditure in 2019 (35.2%), significantly higher since 2012⁴⁵. In addition to the risk of further widening economic disparities, this trend entails a risk of failure to meet emergency medical needs and thus exposure of vulnerable households to health risks. Another general barrier is the serious lack of investment in **mental health services for children and adolescents**, while the majority of such services are concentrated in Athens and Thessaloniki (specialized psychiatric wards in public hospitals or external counseling services).

Special barriers are faced by specific groups of children, such as **children with disabilities**, primarily because of the insufficient number of public Rehabilitation and Recovery Centers with a significant variability from one district to the other, forcing them to turn to private health services and, secondly, due to the shortage of specialist doctors during the certification process in the Disability Certification Centers (KEPA) and inaccessibility of buildings. **Children with migrant background and refugee children** are faced with different barriers to access, related to language and cultural differences, the inability/delay of obtaining the necessary supporting documents (PAAYPA-Temporary Social Security & Healthcare Number for Foreigners), lack of interpreters and intercultural mediators in most public health care centers, and absence of early access to specialized health services due to shortcomings and difficulties during the reception and identification procedures, and also transportation, in the case of stay in RICs. **Roma's** low level of health is directly related to social determinants of health, discrimination and barriers in accessing health services, such as unhealthy living conditions, low educational level, lack of knowledge about disease prevention, lack of knowledge about the content and procedures for claiming benefits, geographical isolation and inability to physically access services, lack of information, and language and communication barriers⁴⁶.

⁴³ According to the special questionnaire on children's health of the National Health Survey 2019 (ELSTAT), 98.1% of children aged 2-14 in Greece have very good or good health, 1.4% fair health and 0.5% poor or very poor health. A similar picture is also shown from the results of the ad hoc questionnaire of EU-SILC 2017 with 98% of children up to 16 years of age reporting very good or good health, 1.2% fair health and 0.8% poor or very poor health.

⁴⁴ The main reason for the unmet medical needs of children is the cost of services (77.7%) followed by other, unspecified reasons (8.9%), distance (7.2%), waiting lists (5.2%) and time constraints (1%). As regards dental care, the cost is the main cause of unmet needs (98.2%), while distance accounts only for 1.8% (see Annex IV, Table 3.16).

⁴⁵ EUROSTAT, 2020.

⁴⁶ National Strategy and Action Plan on Social Integration of Roma 2021 – 2030.

3.3.4. Healthy nutrition

The nutritional status is worrying with high levels of both obesity and malnutrition in different age groups. 37.5% of children aged 2-14 are obese or overweight, while 9.2% are underweight, which is significantly higher for children aged 2-4, reaching almost 1 in 4 (24%) (see Annex IV, Chart 3.9).

Breastfeeding rates are also particularly low. Despite the World Health Organization's recommendations for exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months of infants' life, according to ELSTAT data from the 2019 National Health Survey, only 3.6% of young mothers breastfed for 6 months or more⁴⁷. Moreover, the percentage of low birth weight newborns in Greece is over 9% compared to the average 6.6% of OECD countries⁴⁸.

In Greece, households with children have more economic difficulties in obtaining adequate nutrition (one meal with meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent) compared to households in other European countries. Single-parent households and households with numerous members seem to have great difficulties (see Annex IV, Chart 3.8). In poorer households with dependent children (with family income below 60% of median income), the rate of inability to obtain such a meal every two days is 53.4% compared to 20.2% in Europe (*EU-SILC 2020 data*)⁴⁹.

As regards the access of children in need to healthy nutrition, one general challenge is the lack of an integrated nutrition policy at national level. The institutional framework includes fragmented programs of limited scope and geographical scale within schools (School Meals in selected schools, School scheme focused on specific schools in urban areas) and outside schools (Social Grocery stores operating in some Municipalities, Food aid and basic material support scheme), limiting the effectiveness and coverage of the needs throughout the country. General barriers also relate to the socio-economic situation of parents, namely the workload of the family and the inability to prepare a healthy home meal on a daily basis, the low educational level, the poor dietary habits and income shortages. Further factors affecting the nutritional status are minimum or no physical activity and limited sources of information on nutrition.

Special barriers are faced by **Roma children, child asylum seekers and refugees and homeless children** who do not attend school and are therefore excluded from school food distribution programs. Access to the other programs is also hampered by the lack of adequate information for parents/guardians and non-fulfillment of eligibility conditions (especially for those who do not possess legal documents).

3.3.5. Adequate housing

The general barriers are mainly related to the lack of a specific institutional framework. In particular, there is no comprehensive policy framework to prevent and address homelessness; there are only piecemeal programs aimed at mitigating extreme forms of housing deprivation for specific population groups. At the same time, there is no reliable system for collecting analytical data on the homeless population. Finally, inability to afford the housing and living costs is a major barrier,

⁴⁷ See <https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/5856c8ff-59cd-aef0-2883-f90e4b265706>

⁴⁸ See https://www.oecd.org/els/family/CO_1_3_Low_birth_weight.pdf

⁴⁹ Further, an analysis of the micro-data from the 2019 National Health Survey shows that only half of adolescents aged 15-17 consume at least one portion of fruit or vegetables per day in Greece. See <https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/5856c8ff-59cd-aef0-2883-f90e4b265706>

as the rate of housing costs is very high for families with children: removing the housing expenditure, the poverty risk rate for children reaches 51%, while the respective rate in EU27 is 33%.

Concerning particular groups of children, **Roma children** are largely affected by severe housing deprivation, such as overcrowding, lack of running water or toilets, while a significant proportion of the Roma population lives in makeshift shelters-slums, with inadequate or no connection to power and water grids, and basic shortfalls in infrastructure (Annex IV, Table 3.17). **Children beneficiaries of international or subsidiary protection and their families** are led to homelessness after discontinuation of the material conditions at reception, the inability to join the HELIOS integration support scheme and the current housing schemes that require a minimum period of prior continuous and legal residence. Also, the institutional framework for homelessness is limited to legal residents, excluding many children who are refugees or migrants. A small percentage of **unaccompanied minors** still live in informal/precarious housing conditions, while the majority live in accommodation structures for unaccompanied minors. Important challenges are faced by **children in institutional care**, despite intensive efforts to strengthen the foster care and adoption scheme and to promote de-institutionalization. Placement and living in an institutional care structure is by definition opposed to children's rights, as it entails limitation of independent living and participation in social life and deprivation of choices, with detrimental effects to children's physical and mental health and psychosocial development.

4. TARGETED CATEGORIES OF CHILDREN IN NEED

The identification of the target groups in Section 3 highlights the need to prioritize specific children groups, based on their family composition and/or on the basis of special vulnerability characteristics as well as the country's geographical diversity, current administrative organization and the structure of health services.

Thus, sections 4.1 and 4.2 prioritize targeted children in need based on: (a) the geographical dimension, which refers to children living in non-urban or rural and mountainous areas and children on islands, i.e. areas with evidently low accessibility to basic services for the inhabitants of these areas; and (b) the socio-economic dimension based on their family composition (single-parent and large families), which are most often found at the bottom of the income distribution ladder. Section 4.3 prioritizes children in need based on specific characteristics (e.g. Roma children, children with disabilities, children in institutional care), due to which they face barriers to accessing basic services.

4.1 Geographical dimension (children in non-urban or rural and mountain areas, children in islands)

A significant number of low-income households and children (around 45% of the total child population) live in non-urban, rural, mountainous and remote areas. Studies on economic geography in Greece show a low degree of accessibility to basic services for inhabitants of these regions. For this reason, it seems appropriate to take geographical criteria into account (see Annex ^v) when prioritizing measures proposed under the NAP, especially in pillars relating to the access of vulnerable children to

services, such as health care, education and pre-school care. These needs are highlighted, on the one hand, by officially published data concerning Greek households with children in non-urban, rural and mountainous areas (e.g. low internet access, insufficient coverage of health and child care needs, extracurricular activities), as the geographical heterogeneity⁵⁰ is significantly higher than in other European countries. On the other hand, they are consistent with the results of the Field Research (Survey and Data Collection Request for elaboration of the National Action Plan under the European Child Guarantee), where geographical distance is presented as a major barrier in achieving the objectives of reducing the risk of social exclusion in many key pillars⁵¹.

4.2 Socio-economic dimension

Three target groups fall under this category: (a) children in single-parent families (one single parent with dependent children), (b) children in two-adult families with three or more children, and (c) children in families of three or more adults with dependent children. The latter two groups are often referred to as sub-groups of 'large families'. Both single-parent and large families are at higher risk of poverty, as they are more often found at the bottom of the income distribution scale. These families are unable to cater for adequate health care and healthy nutrition; they face acute problems with housing quality, severe lack of adequate heating and display very high rates of arrears (rent, bills); they have poor access to quality early childhood care and education services, which reflects the serious economic hardship these households face, with a subsequent increased risk of housing deprivation and potential homelessness.

4.3. Targeted children categories based on special characteristics

Four children groups face barriers to accessing basic services. In addition to the general barriers, there are special barriers, which are associated with particular characteristics of each group.

a) Refugee and migrant children. In specific, a proportion of children with refugee or migrant background of about 25% (*according to the data reported in section 3.3.2.*) fail to attend the education system while enrolled. They also live in unsuitable conditions in areas remote from the social fabric or are homeless. At the same time, the healthcare system does not meet the specific needs of children in general.

(b) Roma children experience multiple problems and deprivation, mainly due to disadvantageous, unhealthy living conditions, geographical isolation, the maintenance of outdated social practices (such as early marriages) and the inability to physically access services. Discrimination, stereotypes and stigma, lack of knowledge about the content and procedures of participation in social, economic and political life, along with poorly addressed urban and municipal issues, high illiteracy rates, lack of information and language and communication barriers are also challenges affecting the extent and conditions of their social integration.

⁵⁰ Further information and more details on the geographical criteria to be considered are presented in Annex V.

⁵¹ More information about the results of the Field Research included in Annex X.

(c) Children with disabilities face structural barriers mainly related to de facto limited access to services due to lack of physical accessibility, the shortage of qualified and suitable staff to support them, including the provision of personal assistance, the lack of rehabilitation services and the general lack of a framework of social protection services. In particular, as regards access to education for students with disabilities and/or special educational needs, important initiatives have been taken in recent years to promote the principles of inclusive education (e.g. Objective 12, National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Strategic Action Plan for Equal Access to Education for Students with Disabilities). Naturally, there are still discrepancies between educational policy and pedagogical practice, due to factors such as the rapid increase in the enrolment of students with disabilities in mainstream school classes, lack of initial training for teachers in inclusive education, etc. The goal is to address these challenges in the context of the implementation of the above-mentioned Action Plan.

(d) Children in institutional care spend a long time living in institutions, usually until they reach adulthood, with harmful consequences and unacceptable cutbacks in the protection of their rights and best interests in general. The low number of foster care applicants, the lack of professional foster care especially for children with disabilities, the lack of alternative living arrangements outside institutions both for older children with zero chances of rehabilitation through foster care and adoption and for children who are removed from their biological family before being placed in an institution, combined with the lack of targeted prevention, support and monitoring interventions for vulnerable families in the community, constitute the most important barriers to the de-institutionalization of these children and their smooth social reintegration.

5. OUTREACH AND INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN NEED

Effective implementation of the NAP requires reaching out to children and families in need, as this group has been identified and broken down into more specific target groups (see Sections 3 and 4), with a view to informing them about their rights and the conditions of access to basic services. Adequate, timely and tailored to the specific characteristics of each target group, outreach and information will take place throughout the implementation of the NAP, which, as mentioned above, is a dynamic exercise constantly taking account of ongoing change in socio-economic conditions, both at national and international level. It will also include information and awareness-raising actions, both at national and local level, by making use of already available means of information but also by creating new ones. Against this background, the Network of Representatives is expected to play a crucial role in facilitating awareness-raising at local level, but also among specialized audiences to the extent of competence of their member organizations.

5.1. Information actions at national level: The actions are addressed to the general public, to professionals working in support services for the target group, and to the children themselves, in a direct and interactive way. In particular, they include:

- (a) information campaign in the media and social media (*TV spots, videos, posts, etc.*);
- (b) use of Telephone Helplines to provide accurate and relevant information;

- (c) publication of articles/press releases in newspapers, magazines, scientific journals;
- (d) organization of workshops and conferences as well as information/awareness-raising actions for education, health and childcare workers and students;
- (e) an accessible and child-friendly online information platform for existing benefits/services within the National Coordinator's website;
- (f) Use of available means of interaction with children and young people for direct information/awareness and collection of information (U-report); and
- (g) development of relevant manuals, books, storybooks, comic book stories, adapted to the age and specific characteristics of the target group children.

5.2. Actions at local level: Local actions directly and actively reach out to children in need and their families through the cooperation between network representatives at regional and local level. For example, there are information events in the local community, questionnaires to target groups, semi-structured interviews, activity groups of children/adolescents, consultation and focus groups with children's representatives and family members, awareness-raising workshops, cultural events, information from medical/psychosocial mobile units/streetwork e.g. for street children, adolescent substance users, etc., printed material in all local support services and organizations. Finally, information for children from children is planned, e.g. from the Youth Parliament, fifteen-Member school boards, from influential/acknowledged peers accepted in the group, mediators (e.g. Roma).

The above actions require awareness-raising by local actors, with the assistance of the Network: Municipalities, social services, special childcare services (e.g. Roma branches), associations of vulnerable groups of children and their families (e.g. the Panhellenic Federation of Societies of Parents and Guardians of Disabled People - POSGAMEA, the National Confederation of Disabled People in Greece - ESAMEA, associations of families of children with autism, Down syndrome, etc.), children's institutions, pedagogical institutes, research centers, NGOs, civil non-profit companies, general and special education establishments, citizens' representatives (e.g. citizen's and child's Ombudsman), higher education institutions, etc., children's playgrounds, sports facilities, schools, private coaching schools, nurseries, parents' associations, medical practices, centers for learning difficulties, treatment and rehabilitation, social tutoring centers, Sunday schools, counselling and support centers (see Annex ^{vi}).

6. STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

6.1. Description of the institutional process for the preparation and adoption of the NAP in Greece

According to Article 53 paragraph c of Law 4837/2021, (see Annex I), the National Coordinator of the European Child Guarantee draws up the National Action Plan, in cooperation and consultation with local and regional networks, civil society actors, relevant NGOs, UNICEF, other international organizations and children. The NAP is published by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs; the National Coordinator is involved in the updating of the plan through the same procedure whenever necessary..

6.2. Involvement of stakeholders in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NAP

Under the provisions of Article 53 of Law 4837/21, “during the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and actions to support children in need (the National Coordinator) shall ensure the optimal participation of all national, regional and local authorities, legal persons governed by public and private law and all other authorities, agencies and bodies.....”.

Within the framework of the above provisions, an Interministerial Working Group was established by a joint ministerial decision⁵², with the participation of representatives of ten (10) Ministries. At the initiative of the National Coordinator, representatives of two (2) further Ministries⁵³ are also involved, in order to develop the planning framework and priorities of the NAP at the political level in close cooperation with all stakeholders.

Furthermore, at the initiative of the National Child Guarantee Coordinator, a national Network was organized on the basis of the above provisions at central, regional and local level for the elaboration of the NAP. For the first time, a nationwide Network of representatives of local and regional authorities, Civil Society bodies and universities was organized, without currently having a strict institutional provision and legally defined responsibilities. In particular, the Network consists of: 12 Ministries, 13 Regions, 11 Regional Social Welfare Centers, 332 Municipalities (Social Services and Community Centers), 30 Civil Society Bodies and Organizations, such as the Child Health Institute, the UNHCR, the National Confederation of Persons with Disabilities and the Panhellenic Federation of Parents and Guardians Associations of Persons with Disabilities, the Hellenic Obesity Society, the Association of Social Workers of Greece etc., University Departments and independent authorities related to children's rights⁵⁴, such as the Child's Ombudsman (see details of the Network Bodies in Annex^{vii})

The purpose of setting up the Network is for all actors involved in the field of child protection across the Greek territory to participate actively as a single network in the dynamic process of preparing, implementing and monitoring the NAP. The starting point was the exchange of views and experiences on the characteristics of vulnerable children in Greece and the barriers they face in accessing basic services; this was also a first attempt to take stock of measures being implemented at central, regional and local level.

The ultimate objective is to actively engage the Network in the implementation and follow-up of the Recommendation through its explicit institutional consolidation and widening of its competences. In this context, around 400 representatives of the Network participated in an online consultation organized on 14/1/2022 by the National Coordinator, as well as in a survey conducted between 11 January – early February 2022 which involved two files to be completed:

⁵² See ANNEX ii Joint Ministerial Decision re: “Designation of representatives and their deputies as contact points for the National Social Solidarity Center as National Child Guarantee Coordinator, in application of the provisions of paragraph 2a of article 59 of Law 4837/2021” (Government Gazette YODD 30/21.01.2022).

⁵³ Ministry of Digital Governance, Ministry of Rural Development and Food.

⁵⁴ At the request of the National Coordinator, each body appointed two representatives (1 full and 1 alternate member)).

- 1) Field Survey - Data Collection Questionnaire for the National Action Plan under the European Child Guarantee (see Annex^{viii}) and
- 2) Data Collection Table for the preparation of a National Action Plan under the European Child Guarantee (see Annex^{ix}).

These research tools were developed taking into account good practices of other Member States and they were co-created together with the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE). The aim of the Field Survey was to capture the experience of representatives of actors working in the field of child protection in investigating the root causes of child poverty and social exclusion, the main obstacles that vulnerable groups of children (target groups) face in accessing basic services (as identified by the Recommendation), the impact of the pandemic, as well as policy recommendations from stakeholders' representatives based on their experience with observed gaps. The response to the survey was significant as around 350⁵⁵ questionnaires were completed. The survey involved 173 organizations (mainly municipalities). 82% of the responders to the questionnaires work in jobs related to social protection (and 72% have relevant higher education qualifications). The statistical processing and analysis of responses was carried out by the IOBE (see Annex^x). With a view to broadening research and involving as many civil society stakeholders as possible, as well as individuals, these questionnaires have been posted on the website of E.K.K.A.⁵⁶ and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs⁵⁷. In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the National Coordinator will receive technical assistance from DG Reform in defining the governance model during the implementation phase of the NAP⁵⁸.

The participation of children is also an important part in the preparation of the National Action Plan. They were represented in two actions:

- (a) A questionnaire was completed anonymously via a web-based platform Survey Monkey (see Annex^{xi}). The questionnaire was sent to general secondary and upper secondary vocational schools (EPALs) throughout the country, after being approved by the Ministry of Education and acquiring consent from their guardians. The questionnaire was developed in cooperation with UNICEF and the Child's Ombudsman. The National Institute of Labour & Human Resources (EIEAD/NILHR) processed the questionnaires (see summary results of the sample survey in Annex^{xii}).
- (b) At the same time, one-hour focus groups with children aged 12-17 years were organized with children from the following vulnerable groups: Roma children, children with disabilities, unaccompanied minors, LGBTQ children or LGBTQ family members, children living in institutions, children in precarious living conditions and children from low-income families. The focus groups were coordinated by 2 E.I.E.AD.-researchers with relevant research experience and an E.K.K.A. social worker. The National Institute of Labour & Human Resources (E.I.E.AD.) analyzed the data obtained from the above-mentioned focus groups (see data analysis in Annex^{xiii}).

⁵⁵ In particular, the responses came from 159 municipalities of the country, mainly from the Community centers, 7 from regions, 5 from non-profit institutions, 1 from a University and 1 from a Public sector Agency. The survey included participation from all 13 regions, while 23.1% of the questionnaires replied came from municipalities in the Region of Attica, 12.1% from Central Macedonia and an equal share from Thessaly.

⁵⁶ https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Child_Guarantee_Questionnaire_Institutions

⁵⁷ <https://paidi.gov.gr/>

⁵⁸ For more information see Section 11 (11.1)

In addition, two focus groups were carried out by UNICEF and the Children's Ombudsman with children of various vulnerable groups (see data analysis in Annex^{xiv}).

7. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE TARGETS

7.1 Introduction

The main objective of the European Child Guarantee (ECG) is to guarantee the access of any child at risk of poverty or social exclusion to key services, such as early care, education, healthcare, nutrition and housing.

In the framework of this NAP, primary objectives have been set per sector of intervention and a system of indicators has been developed to monitor and evaluate progress towards these objectives, which also constitute more specific sectoral targets. The objectives and targets are linked to concrete policy measures and specific actions, which are laid out in Sections 8 and 9.

The NAP targets mainly consist in reducing child poverty and social exclusion, as well as increasing the share of children in need who gain access to key services. In addition to the quantitative targets, the NAP also includes qualitative targets, mainly related to the improvement of the services provided. This section presents below the proposed quantitative and qualitative targets for the NAP by area of intervention.

7.2 Targets for reducing child poverty and for social protection of the target groups

The progress for reducing child poverty and social exclusion is monitored on the basis of indicators (Table 7.1), which are already part of or have been proposed to be integrated into European or national monitoring frameworks⁵⁹. In particular, the objective is to ensure that the rate of children (aged 0-17) at risk of poverty or social exclusion will not exceed 24% in 2030, versus 32% in 2021 and 37.7% in 2015⁶⁰. The target has been set in view of achieving convergence to the EU average, based on the latest available value of the indicator (24% in 2020). The target can be seen as ambitious (reduction by 8 percentage points), but also achievable, as a reduction of 6.2 p.p. was already recorded in the previous five years as a result of social protection policies (such as the minimum guaranteed income), but also due to wider socio-economic developments (such as the reduction of unemployment), developments which are expected to continue having a positive impact in the

⁵⁹ European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG, INITIAL VERSION OF THE MONITORING FRAMEWORK FOR THE EUROPEAN CHILD GUARANTEE, SPC/ISG/2022/2/2, Brussels, 18 February 2022.

⁶⁰ It is reminded that on the European level, in accordance with the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights, it has been decided to reduce, by 2030, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million, i.e. to reduce the rate of people at risk of poverty or exclusion (AROPE) from 21.1% in 2019 to 17.6% or by 3.5 percentage points. One third (1/3) of the total (5 million persons) must be children. In this context, the European Commission has made a proposal on the national targets to be set by member states, also pointing out that those who are far from the EU benchmark (such as Greece) must make greater efforts. Therefore, the main indicator that will be used to monitor the progress of targets both for the general population and for children is the AROPE rate. It is a composite indicator including the share of population living under the poverty line or/and in conditions of material deprivation or/and in households with low work intensity. The data on AROPE rate in the NAP are based on the new definition of the indicator (code ilc_peps01n of Eurostat) which has been developed in the context of the objectives of the 2030 European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

current decade⁶¹ Also, the recent increase recorded for 2021 based on the latest EU-SILC data can be attributed to the impact of emergency containment measures to tackle the pandemic (income reference year: 2020) and should not be considered permanent.

Targets should also be set in individual components of the indicator, as well as in the dimensions of poverty that are not limited to the number of children in need. In particular, the target is that the rate of children at risk of poverty (monitored by the AROP indicator and determined solely on the basis of income), be reduced to 18.5% in 2030, with an intermediate target of 20% in 2025, from 23.7% in 2021 and 26.6% in 2015, compared to 19.2% in the EU. It is important that poverty reduction is not only driven by an improvement in the income situation of children close to the poverty line or in households facing temporary income difficulties. For this reason, the target is to reduce the poverty gap for children to 22% in 2030 (from 27.1% in 2021 and 34.5% in 2015). In addition, in the social exclusion dimension, a target is set for combined access to the key ECG services. In particular, the target is that the rate of children experiencing severe material and social deprivation⁶² drop to 8.1% in 2030, from 19% in 2020 and 23.9% in 2015, compared to the EU average of 8.1% in 2020.

To achieve the above targets, the minimum income guarantee scheme is being implemented as a broader safety net, alongside additional measures to cover basic material deprivation. Subsidy policy measures to support families in raising children and ensure children's rights are also expected to contribute to tackling child poverty. Finally, financial benefits are foreseen to address housing costs, while specific subsidies are foreseen to address energy poverty, and targeted regulatory and policy measures for affected households are being implemented and will be reassessed as the phenomenon evolves.

A target is also set to reduce the rate of children in households with very low work intensity (below 7.2% in 2030, from 7.7% in 2020). This target will be supported by the following actions: (a) measures to improve access to employment and activation measures for all jobseekers (in particular young people, the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups in the labour market) and for economically inactive people; (b) measures to promote self-employment and the social economy; and (c) actions to achieve a better work-life balance, including through access to affordable childcare.

Finally, in order to ensure coherence with the broader policy framework, a target is set to reduce the rate of Roma children at risk of poverty from 99% to less than 80%, based on the National Strategy and Action Plan on Social Integration of Roma (2021-2030). This target will be supported by the operation and strengthening of the Roma branches of Community Centers that facilitate the equal access of Roma to benefits and services.

⁶¹ Indicatively, in the long-term projections of the European Commission under the examination of sustainability of pension systems, the unemployment rate among persons aged 20-64 in Greece is expected to drop to 12.1% in 2030, from 17.5% in 2019 (Economic and Financial Affairs, The 2021 Ageing Report: Economic and Budgetary Projections for the EU Member States (2019-2070), Institutional Paper 148, May 2021).

⁶² It is defined as the percentage of the population experiencing enforced inability to afford at least 7 of the 13 deprivation items (6 have to do with the individual, such as replacement of worn-out clothes, and 7 have to do with the household, such as the ability to face unexpected expenses and overdue payments).

Table 7.1: Quantitative targets for reducing child poverty

Indicator	Historical value (year)	Current situation (year)	EU Value (2020)	Target for 2025	Target for 2030
Rate of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) ^{1,4}	37.7 (2015)	32 (2021)	24 (2020)	<28 ³	<24.2 ³
Rate of children at risk of poverty (AROP) ¹	26.6 (2015)	23.7 (2021)	19.2 (2020)	<20 ³	<18.5 ³
Relative median poverty risk gap for children ¹	34.5 (2015)	27.1 (2021)	26.5 (2020)	<25 ³	<22 ³
Rate of children with severe material and social deprivation ¹	23.9 (2015)	19.0 (2020)	8.1 (2020)	<15 ³	<8.1 ³
Rate of Roma children aged <18 at risk of poverty ²	-	99 (2016)	-	<90	<80
Rate of children in quasi-jobless households (with very low work intensity)	10.6 (2015)	7.7 (2020)	7.2 (2020)	<7.5	<7.2

Sources: ¹ Eurostat, EU SILC (9/3/2022). ² National Strategy and Action Plan on Social Inclusion of the Roma (2021 – 2030). ⁴ Based on the new definition of the indicator (ilc_peps01n).

7.3 Targets for access to early childhood education and care

The main priority in this area is to strengthen children's access to quality pre-school education and care, with three quantitative indicators along with corresponding targets being established. In particular, the target is that the rate of children under 3 who receive formal early childhood education and care become 48% (from 31.65% in 2019), while the target is that at least 96% of children between 3 years old and the age for starting compulsory education have access to the same service (from 95.7% in 2019), which has been set as European target in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (Table 7.2). At the same time, the aim is to increase the number of existing places and in particular to create 50,000 new early childhood care places for infants aged between 2 months and 2.5 years.

A more specific target is set for Roma children, where attendance of formal early childhood education is at a lower level. In particular, in line with the National Strategy and Action Plan on the Social Integration of Roma, the target is that at least 75% of Roma children aged over 3 should participate in formal early childhood education and care.

The above targets will be supported by the universal reform of the access framework and in particular through a set of interventions focused on strengthening

infrastructure and reforming the framework for access of infants, toddlers and children to nursery programs with a focus on children in need.

In the context of upgrading early childhood education and care services, the improvement and harmonization of the "educational" content for early childhood education and care (the "Kipseli" program) was set as a qualitative objective, which is being piloted with a milestone of universal implementation in 2023. In addition, the reform of the early childhood intervention framework will contribute to enhancing the quality of services for children with disabilities and special learning needs in particular, covering 1,450 children out of 8,700 by 2025.

Table 7.2: Quantitative targets for access to early childhood education and care

Indicator	Most recent value (year)	Target for 2025	Target for 2030
Rate of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion receiving formal early childhood education and care (ECEC) under the age of 3	31.65 (2019)		48%
Rate of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion receiving formal early childhood education and care (ECEC) between 3 years old and the age for starting compulsory education¹	95.7 (2019)	>96	>96 ²
Rate of Roma children over 3 in formal early childhood education and care (ECEC)³	69 (2016)	>72	>75 ³

Sources: ¹ Eurostat, EU SILC. ² Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). ³ National Strategy and Action Plan on Social Inclusion of the Roma (2021 – 2030).

7.4 Targets for access to education and school activities

Regarding access to compulsory/primary and secondary education, a major challenge is still the low participation and low average school performance of children in target groups (Table 7.3). As regards disparities in learning performance, a key objective is to improve the learning performance of students from low socio-economic backgrounds through the implementation of skill development programs, support tutoring and wider psychosocial support for students. In particular, the targets are: to increase the share of high-performing pupils, reduce the share of low-performing pupils and increase the average marks of this category of pupils, based on OECD's PISA program.

A fundamental objective is also to ensure equal access to quality, non-segregated and inclusive formal education and to strengthen regular schooling for people from marginalized social groups, in particular Roma children, refugees and migrants. In particular, the target is that the rate of Roma children aged 5-17 who are members of households and enrolled in education should be at least 75% in 2030 (from 69% in 2016). In addition, in line with the National Strategy and Action Plan for Social Integration of Roma, the target is to lower the percentage of people who felt discriminated against for being Roma when they were at school to 15%, from 20% in 2016. Finally, for children of refugees - migrants, the target is that all children in this

category (from 95% in 2020) should be enrolled in formal education. These targets are mainly supported by actions promoting the integration of children in formal education, reception classes in zones of educational priority and complementary support actions for Roma children, as well as non-formal education actions for refugee and migrant children.

Finally, sectoral qualitative targets are established: ensuring adequate educational staff through teacher training actions and reducing the digital divide by ensuring internet connectivity for pupils in remote areas.

Table 7.3: Quantitative targets for access to education and school activities

Indicator	Last available value (year)	Target for 2025	Target for 2030
Percentage of pupils in the lowest quartile of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in Greece who perform in the first quartile among pupils from all countries.	19.5 (2018) ¹	>30	>46.6 ²
Percentage of 15-year-old pupils of low socio-economic status with low performance (fail to reach level 2 on PISA scale) in text comprehension, math and science	19.9 (2018) ¹	<17	<15 ³
PISA score for 15-year-olds with low socio-economic status	-	-	>525.6 ²
Percentage of Roma children of compulsory education age enrolled in education, members of households, 5-17 years old	69 (2016)	>72	>75 ⁴
Percentage of persons who felt discriminated against because of being Roma in the last 5 years, when they were at school as a parent or pupil, respondents 16(+)	20 (2016)	<18	<15 ⁴
Percentage of Roma children between 4 years old and the age for starting compulsory primary education attending early childhood education, members of households	28 (2016)	>31	>35 ⁴
Percentage of child refugees and migrants enrolled in formal education	95 (2022)	100	100 ²

Sources: ¹ OECD PISA. ² UNICEF Country Program Documents. ³ Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). ⁴ National Strategy and Action Plan on Social Inclusion of the Roma (2021 – 2030).

7.5 Targets for access to healthcare

Although Greece performs relatively well on conventional child and adolescent health indicators, inequalities persist, as evidenced by high rates of unmet health needs. Therefore, the primary objective is to remove barriers to access so that all children have effective and free access to high-quality healthcare.

It is thus proposed to establish quantitative indicators relating to the reduction of unmet medical and dental needs for children at risk of poverty (Table 7.4). In particular, it is proposed to set a target of reducing the rate of children at risk of poverty with unmet medical and dental needs to maximum 2% by 2030, from 4.5% and 6% respectively in 2017 (against 3% and 2.5% on average in the EU). These goals will be met by expanding vaccination and neonatal screening programs, and by the operation of preventive healthcare facilities for families and children. In addition, the establishment of mobile units will help to address geographical disparities and improve access for children at regional and local level.

A broader qualitative target is to respond comprehensively to the physical and mental health care needs of unaccompanied minors. To achieve this target, the creation of mobile units for the provision of primary health care for unaccompanied minors and the development of Day Centers to support refugee minors with mental health problems are envisaged.

Table 7.4: Quantitative targets for access to healthcare

Indicator	Historical value (year)	Current situation (year)	EU Value	Target for 2025	Target for 2030
Rate of children at risk of poverty with unmet dental needs	-	6.0 (2017)	2.5 (2017)	4.0	2.0
Rate of children at risk of poverty with unmet medical needs	-	4.5 (2017)	3.0 (2017)	3.2	2.0

Data Source: Eurostat, EU SILC.

7.6 Targets for access to healthy nutrition

In the area of access to healthy food and with a view to improving dietary habits and promoting physical activity, two targets are set for obesity, in line with other relevant plans and programs (Table 7.5). In particular, based on the National Public Health Action Plan, the proportion of obese children is projected to fall below 10% by 2030, from 25% in 2017. Similarly, the rate of overweight or obese children (aged 2 to 14) is projected in the UNICEF national program to fall below 24.5% in 2030, from 37.5% in 2019.

These targets are underpinned by continuous information and awareness-raising activities on healthy eating and the importance of exercise, health education and food distribution programs for schoolchildren. To this end, it is also planned to develop an Action Plan to address childhood obesity⁶³ for "children in need" and to develop an Action Plan on the control and management of risk factors related to healthy nutrition and physical activity (under the National Program "Spyros Doxiadis").

⁶³ Ministry of Labour through TSI, ANNEX, excel: 8.2.4 26, 30-31 and Section 8.2.1

Furthermore, given the importance of breastfeeding for the later growth of children, the target is to increase the percentage of young mothers who have breast-fed for 6 months or more to at least 50% in 2030, from 36.6% in 2019. To this end, legislative measures and policies are being planned for the creation of breastfeeding facilities and human milk banks and are expected to have a positive impact on the perception of breastfeeding.

Table 7.5: Quantitative targets for access to healthy nutrition

Indicator	Most recent value (year)	Target for 2025	Target for 2030
Percentage of obese children	25 (2017)	<18	<10 ¹
Percentage of overweight or obese children (2 to 14 years old)	37.5 (2019)	<30	<24.5 ²
Percentage of young mothers who breastfed for 6 months or more	36.6 (2019) ³	>40	>50 ⁴

Sources: ¹ National Action Plan on Public Health. ² UNICEF Country Program Documents. ³ National Health Survey. ⁴

7.7 Targets for access to housing

In the area of housing, the priorities are: effective access to affordable and appropriate housing for children at risk of poverty and promotion of de-institutionalization. In addition, arrangements aim at improving the living conditions of Roma children and ensuring an appropriate accommodation framework for all unaccompanied minors.

More specifically, as regards the first area of intervention, four quantitative targets are set forth. In particular, the target is to reduce the rate of excessive burden of housing cost for children at risk of poverty to less than 60% by 2030, from 84% in 2020 and 93.2% in 2015 (compared to 31.7% in 2020 in the EU). Similarly, a target is set to bring the percentage of severe housing deprivation for children at risk of poverty down to 14% in 2030, from 18.1% in 2020 (compared to 14% in the EU). In order to achieve the above objectives, housing and work reintegration programs are being implemented and a housing allowance has been introduced. More specific social or energy policy measures have been introduced for the payment of electricity bills, the launching of investments to improve energy efficiency or for consumer protection.

Improving the standard of living and the integration of Roma children into the urban fabric is a key policy objective in tandem with the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Integration of Roma. In this regard, a target is set to reduce the percentage of people living in deprivation in terms of housing conditions to below 28%, from 37% in 2016 (Table 7.6), by implementing programs for temporary relocation to suitable facilities.

Specific measures have been taken to protect unaccompanied children, with a view to developing a comprehensive shelter system with adequate capacity and quality. In this context, the establishment of a framework of standards for the operation of accommodation facilities for unaccompanied minors is imminent, which will set

quality standards for these facilities, together with the development of a mechanism for the supervision and evaluation of the facilities.

Finally, the transition from institutional care to care at the local community level is a key objective, and the corresponding target is to reduce the number of children in institutional care to zero by 2030. In this context, the development of a harmonized approach to monitoring the quality of the out-of-home care system is also established as a qualitative target. To this end, a multidimensional policy has been designed, focusing on the following pillars: prevention, by creating a system to avoid institutionalization and support the biological family, strengthening of the institution of foster care and implementation of alternative forms of living in the community.

Table 7.6: Quantitative targets for access to housing

Indicator	Historical value (year)	Current situation (year)	EU Value	Target for 2025	Target for 2030
Rate of excessive housing cost burden for children at risk of poverty	93.2 (2015) ¹	84.0 (2020) ¹	31.7 (2020) ¹	<75	<60 ³
Rate of severe housing deprivation for children at risk of poverty	13.7 (2015) ¹	18.1 (2020) ¹	14.0 (2019) ¹	<16	<14 ³
Percentage of Roma people living in deprivation in terms of housing conditions (living in a residence that is very dark or with leaking roof/wet walls and/or floors, no bathtub/shower, no internal toilet)	-	37 (2016)	-	<33	<28 ²
Number of children living in institutional care	-	1477 (2022 7)	-	0	0 ³

Sources: ¹ Eurostat, EU SILC. ² National Strategy and Action Plan on Social Inclusion of the Roma (2021 – 2030). ³

8. MEASURES, FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND TIMETABLES

This Section includes current (in 8.1) and planned (in 8.2) policy measures. The measures that form the supporting policy framework are set out in detail in Section 9 (Detailed information is recorded in the Annex^{xv} to Section 8.1, the Annex^{xvi} to Section 8.2 and the Annex^{xvii} to Section 9. Also, relevant information per Ministry is provided in the hyperlinks in the footnote⁶⁴).

⁶⁴ Information per Ministry in hyperlink:

- [Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs](#)
- [Ministry of Interior](#)
- [Ministry of Education](#)
- [Ministry of Health](#)
- [Ministry of Migration & Asylum](#)

8.1. Identification of current policy measures

Early childhood education and care: For all “children in need”, access to early childhood education and care is made through the provision of care and accommodation places for infants, toddlers and children in structures (nurseries, childcare facilities and integrated care crèches) (see also section 9.1.3.). This service was initially provided so far through the Work-Life Balance program. The aim, logic and purpose of this program has been to facilitate the access of mothers to the labour market, and it expires in 2022. However, the relevant service was redesigned and has already been established by the provision of article 104 of Law 4941/2022 (A113). Specifically, the provision of this service is being envisaged to ensure that it takes up a purely child-centered character and reflects the well-established view that providing high-quality and expert pre-school education to children, especially in their early childhood, is primarily their fundamental right, but also an investment in human capital and a way to actually break the intergenerational cycle of poverty (more detailed analysis in sub-section 8.2.1. *Source of funding: PUBLIC EXPENDITURE / ESF+ CALLS UNDER REGIONAL PROGRAMS. In specific, the budget for the year 2022-2023 is 233,200,000 euro (broken down in a. 88,618,676 euro from ESF+, ROP under Child Guarantee, and b. 144,581,324 from national resources including resources of the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs). As of 2025, the service will be covered by purely national resources.*

Furthermore, child-friendly facilities are in place for children living in accommodation structures for asylum seekers, with a number of actions for pre-school age children, as well as kindergartens.

Education: In the area of vocational education and training, the participation rates are low (28% versus 50% EU average) and dropout rates are high (11%). Therefore, pursuant to the Strategic Plan for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth 2022-2024, priority is given to upgrading the vocational education, effectively linking it with the labour market and improving the employment prospects. The program “New Beginning at EPAL” – “MNAE” is a multidimensional program including a set of interventions related to the psychosocial and cognitive support of students (2017-2023 budget €32,436,068.33 + 10,609,515: 2022-2023 budget €43,045,583.33 OP Human Resources Development, Education & Lifelong Learning, ESF NSRF 2014-2020. PA 2021-2027: The budget has not been specified for the new program period/Source of Funding: Program Human Resources & Social Cohesion (Public Expenditure: co-financing ESF+ and national resources) and additional non-eligible national resources). Under the implementation of the Child

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- [Ministry of Civil Protection](#)
 - [Ministry of Culture & Sports](#)
 - [Ministry of Rural Development & Food](#)
 - [Ministry of Justice](#)
 - [Ministry of Finance](#)

Guarantee in Greece, with the aim to include in VET trainees/learners from vulnerable social groups, a program is being implemented that foresees the development of flexible, modular, interconnected skill development and job orientation programs, tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups and with the end goal of broadening the opportunities for access to employment or entrepreneurship (*total budget: 340,665 euro/ source of funding: UNICEF DYPA (former OAED)*). In parallel, supported teaching programs are implemented in all Secondary Education structures, including the Vocational Lyceums (*total budget 2022-2023: €7,503,591 NSRF 2014-2020, European Social Fund/ Source of Funding: Program Human Resources & Social Cohesion (Public Expenditure: co-financing ESF+ and national resources and additional non-eligible national resources)*), while there is broader provision for the psychosocial support of school students at all levels of compulsory education, as, in the context of tackling the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been deemed necessary to reinforce schools and enhance the psychosocial support of the school community with psychologists and social workers [*budget 2021-2022: €46,255,991 (2022-2023: €5,904,000) NSRF 2014-2020 European Social Fund / OP Human Resources Development, Education & Lifelong Learning, PA 2021-2027: The budget has not been specified for the new program period / Source of Funding: Program Human Resources & Social Cohesion (Public Expenditure: co-financing ESF+ and national resources) and additional non-eligible national resources*].

Major steps have been taken in the last five years to support equal access to education through educational reforms and initiatives in view of ensuring equal opportunities to education, training and lifelong learning regardless of the social or economic background, and reducing the educational inequality, both being strategic priorities. Especially for refugee, migrant and Roma children, actions are being implemented for inclusion in education and support of regular attendance (*PA 2021-2027: The budget has not been specified for the new Program period / Source of Funding: Program Human Resources & Social Cohesion (Public Expenditure: co-financing ESF+ and national resources) and additional non-eligible national resources*). By way of illustration, the integration of non-Greek-speaking children in education takes place through Reception Classes (Zones of Educational Priority/ZEP), (*2022-2023 budget: €18,716,441 NSRF 2014-2020, European Social Fund, OP Human Resources Development, Education & Lifelong Learning PA 2021-2027: The budget has not been specified for the new Program period, Source of Funding: Program Human Resources & Social Cohesion (Public Expenditure: co-financing ESF+ and national resources and additional non-eligible national resources)*); particularly for children who are asylum seekers or refugees, Refugee Reception and Education Structures are established (DYEP) depending on the local needs (*PA 2021-2027: The budget has not been specified for the new Program period, Source of Funding: Program Human Resources & Social Cohesion (Public Expenditure: co-financing ESF+ and national resources and additional non-eligible national resources)*) and non-formal education programs are also in place (*budget: The cost is calculated per school year – Cost of school year 2021-2022, €12,603,146.40/ Total cost: €34,520,377.61*). Moreover, there are actions supplementary to the formal education system, to tackle educational inequality. Special support interventions are implemented specifically for Roma children, to enhance enrolment in compulsory education, through individualized and group interventions within Roma communities (*budget: €6,000,000/NSRF- OP Human Resources Development, Education & Lifelong Learning*), as well as through interventions to support schools, education staff and

educators (*budget: €900,000 /source of funding: PUBLIC EXPENDITURE/ESF+ actions under the Program Human Resources & Social Cohesion*) and to enable school enrolment for displaced people.

Specific initiatives have been taken to develop and promote an inclusive education system that meets the needs of disabled persons. To support students with disabilities or/and special educational needs, there is provision for expert support programs through institutions facilitating inclusive education, such as parallel support-tutoring from Special Education & Training (EAE) teachers, specially organized and adequately staffed Integration Classes (TE) in general and vocational education schools (*2022-2023 budget: €60,453,288 NSRF 2014-2020/ European Social Fund OP Human Resources Development, Education & Lifelong Learning / PA 2021-2027: The budget has not been specified for the new Program period*) and Extra Tuition (*2022-2023 budget: €6,533,391, NSRF 2014-2020/ European Social Fund OP Human Resources Development, Education & Lifelong Learning. PA 2021-2027: The budget has not been specified for the new Program period. Source of Funding: Program Human Resources & Social Cohesion, Public Expenditure: co-financing ESF+ and national resources and additional non-eligible national resources*). In addition to the above, a child with disability or/and special educational needs may receive support in the mainstream school from Special Aids or School Nurses or scientific staff or a special assistant recommended and made available by the family (*2022-2023 budget: €200,014,531, NSRF 2014-2020, European Social Fund OP Human Resources Development, Education & Lifelong Learning and €9,097,297 through ROP/PA 2021-2027: The budget has not been specified for the new Program period. For the period 2021-2027, the action will be financed from the Regional Programs of PA 2021-2027*). Moreover, there is provision for coverage of the expenses for their travel to primary and secondary education (*budget: 175,000,000 /source of funding: Ministry of Interior – Central Independent Resources*).

Extracurricular activities: The Creative Activity Centers for Children (CACC) provide high-quality social services for childrens' extracurricular activities. Currently, the relevant services are part and subcategory of the annual call for the program of children's access to services of early childhood centers, in view of saving administrative procedures. In the year 2022-2023, the earmarked budget of the service is €98.000.000 / *source of funding: resources from PA 2021-2027 /ESF+/ Regional Programs and national resources. There is respective planning to cover the period until school year 2024-2025, while thereafter the service will be covered from purely national resources*. Special centers operate for children with disabilities (CACCD) offering creative activities for children and adolescents in view of social integration of beneficiaries and prevention of their institutionalization. Access to extracurricular activities is also ensured by camp programs for children (*budget: €35,000,000/ source of funding: Special Account for the Implementation of Social Policies-ELEKP*), including children with disabilities (*total budget: €4,650,000 for 2022/ source of funding: state budget*) and Roma children (*total budget: €745.000,00 / source of funding: European Economic Area Funding Mechanism/European Social Fund*), as well as actions to enhance children's contact with culture, including by subsidies for the purchase of books (*budget: €3,600,000 / source of funding: Special Account for the Implementation of Social Policies-ELEKP*).

Healthcare: In the area of primary prevention, there is provision for a set of awareness-raising and information actions for the school population in the context of health education, aiming at the acquisition of knowledge and skills for adoption of healthy behaviors among the general school population, through basic primary prevention principles and positive attitudes (without connection to diseases and symptoms or illness conditions). (*Budget/ source of funding: Human resources of primary healthcare structures – The educational material is financed from the State Budget by extraordinary grant*). There is also provision for the implementation of the National Vaccination Program, addressed to special and vulnerable groups of the population, children, minors, traveling populations and populations at risk. This sector also includes the operation of Family Planning Health Units, providing services of social support to families, clinical examination, prevention and counselling (*source of funding: state budget from Health Regions*), as well as the Child – Mother Care Units providing mostly prevention services (*source of funding: state budget*). Concerning secondary prevention, the National Newborns Screening Program is implemented (*source of funding: state budget*).

In specific, in view of promoting mental health, efforts were made to fill the gaps in availability of the essential services, considering the geographical disparities. Namely, in the context of the broader mental health reform, the shift to a community-based care model has been enhanced, through development of Community Mental Health Centers for Children and Adolescents in four (4) regions (*budget: €1,640,000/year- source of funding: PA 2021-2027 AND ORDINARY BUDGET*) and parallel establishment of five (5) shelters in Athens, Thessaloniki and Dodecanese and four (4) accommodation facilities in Athens and Thessaloniki (*total budget: €3,600,000/year - source of funding: PA 2021-2027 AND ORDINARY BUDGET*). To eliminate the geographical barriers, thirteen (13) mobile units were established to provide psychosocial support services to children and adolescents (*budget: €3,640,000/ year - source of funding: PA 2021-2027 AND ORDINARY BUDGET*) and a tele-psychiatry network was developed (*source of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund*). Finally, in view of early detection and management of psychotic disorders symptoms, early intervention in psychosis units were established with nationwide coverage (*budget: €7,500,000/year - source of funding: PA 2021-2027 AND ORDINARY BUDGET*). Emphasis was also placed on the development of specialist structures for vulnerable groups of children (day centers and shelters for children and adolescents with psychosocial problems (*total budget: €2,100,000/ source of funding: NSRF 2014-2020*), for abused children and adolescents (*budget: €500,000/year - source of funding: PA 2021-2027 AND ORDINARY BUDGET*) mental health and psychosocial support services for underage refugees and migrants (*total budget: €1,456,000/year - source of funding: PA 2021-2027 AND ORDINARY BUDGET/ADDITIONAL €900,000 FROM PRIVATE FUNDING UNTIL 2023*), support services for children and adolescents with eating disorders (*budget: €500,000/year - source of funding: PA 2021-2027 AND ORDINARY BUDGET*). Finally, a comprehensive approach was developed for children with autism spectrum disorders, with the establishment of Day Centers (*budget: €1,000,000/year PA 2021-2027 AND ORDINARY BUDGET*), accommodation facilities and one (1) short-stay shelter (*total budget: €2,760,000/year - source of funding: PA 2021-2027 AND ORDINARY BUDGET*).

Healthy nutrition: To improve child nutrition and dietary patterns in the school setting, school meals are provided to Primary School pupils ("School Meals") in

preselected schools⁶⁵ (*budget: €92,000,000/year. Source of funding: state budget*) and fruit, vegetable and milk are distributed in certain schools in urban areas (“School Program”) (*budget: €16,522,366.68 for the period 2020-2023. Source of funding: EU and state expenditure*). In parallel, special measures are foreseen to promote breastfeeding, such as the creation of breastfeeding facilities in the community and workplaces and the implementation of the initiative “Baby-friendly hospitals” (*source of funding: state budget*); these policies resulted to higher breastfeeding rates and more dominant breastfeeding-friendly practices. For children of families with refugee background, including unaccompanied minors, who stay in the Reception and Identification Centers, free-of-charge age-appropriate meals are provided depending on their medical needs (*total estimated cost for all Greece €102,959,200/year 2021 (beginning of action: October): €25,739,800, Asylum, Migration & Integration Fund-TAME, Domestic Security Fund, Emergency Support Instrument, PIB, Ordinary Budget or other financial resources*).

Housing: Interventions in this sector focus either on addressing complete homelessness or tackling the excessive housing cost burden through benefits and energy poverty alleviation schemes. The first pillar includes the “Housing and Work” program, aiming at enhancing the social reintegration capacity for individuals and families living in homelessness, through immediate transition of homeless persons to independent living, provision of counselling and vocational rehabilitation services and more rational linking to the current economic assistance (*budget: €10,000,000 / source of funding: State budget*). The second pillar includes first the housing allowance, addressed to low-income households burdened with the cost of renting their main residence (*budget: 402,000,000 euro (for 2022) / source of funding: State Budget*) and the heating allowance (*budget: 84,000,000 euro for 2022 / source of funding: State Budget*). In this context, an electronic survey has been developed, to diagnose the housing precariousness conditions for beneficiaries of the housing allowance. The survey will allow the Ministry of Labour and the Social Services of the Municipalities to apply targeted homelessness prevention actions. In parallel, a set of targeted measures has been developed, to tackle energy poverty under the current policy framework. Namely, a preferential power supply tariff is provided in view of protecting the affected households (*budget: €45,000,000/year of implementation*) and the Vulnerable Customer Register has been developed with special protection measures. Specific initiatives have been launched to educate and inform the affected households about a more rational energy management (*budget €10,000,000/year*). Moreover, the program “Exiconomo-Aftonomo” (Energy Saving and Autonomy) seeks to improve energy efficiency and upgrade the housing stock, while additional actions aim at promoting renewable energy sources in buildings of affected households, either by system installation subsidies or by incentive schemes (*total budget: €720,000,000/ source of funding: Ministry of Environment and Energy*). Finally, by granting an “energy card” to affected households, specific quantities of energy products are provided, at a preferential price, to cover the minimum thermal comfort conditions of households (*budget: €45.000.000/ year of implementation*). It is

⁶⁵ The total number of daily meals and of the Municipalities to be included in the Program is decided by the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs and OPEKA, and the schools are specified by Joint Ministerial Decision of the Ministers for Labour and Social Affairs and Education and Religions.

pointed out that the set of regulatory measures for the protection of affected households is addressed to households living in extreme energy poverty conditions. However, depending on the evolution of the energy poverty phenomenon, the definition of a deviation threshold will be considered, in order to protect a bigger number of affected households.

Particularly for Roma children, their temporary relocation is promoted, to places that fulfill the conditions of decent living, where comprehensive social integration support services are provided, following the social housing standards (*average relocation cost per settlement €2,500,000 (for around 30-50 families)/source of funding: Public Investment Program (PIP) / NSRF (ESF-ROP)*). The provision of adequate housing for children-members of families that seek or are beneficiaries of international protection is ensured by their eligibility for the respective programs of housing in flats within the urban fabric (programs ESTIA and HELIOS). Both programs include, in a holistic manner, the provision of support services (*ESTIA PROGRAM-budget: 91,513,400.03/ source of funding: European Commission DGHOME/ HELIOS PROGRAM - source of funding: EUROPEAN COMMISSION, PIP*). In particular, for a comprehensive response to the housing needs of unaccompanied minors, a National Emergency Response Mechanism has been put in place, aimed at detecting, identifying and providing psychosocial services to unaccompanied minors in homelessness or precarious living conditions (*The Mobile Units and Day Centers in Athens and Thessaloniki cost around €1,300,000/year. Source of funding: European Commission via the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Upon expiry of EU funding, the project will be continued under the National Program of the Migration and Domestic Affairs Fund*). This action is supplemented by the referral of unaccompanied minors to accommodation structures (*Financed by donation of the Foreign Ministry of Denmark. Upon expiry of funding from this Donation, the project will be continued under the National Program of the Migration and Domestic Affairs Fund*), before their placement in long-term accommodation structures (shelter houses and semi-autonomous accommodation flats (*Source of funding: National Program of the Migration and Domestic Affairs Fund, EEA GRANTS, HOME PROJECT & National Development Program-NDP*)).

In the broader framework of promoting de-institutionalization, a number of actions are foreseen (regulatory measures and a country-wide awareness campaign on fostering), aiming to take children out of the institutional-type structures and place them in other settings of alternative accommodation and care. Finally, there are Shelters for abused women and their children, the specific needs of which are assessed 2023 annually (*Financing of the program has been extended until the end of 2023. The budget is specified depending on the inclusion decision for each shelter. They are co-financed from the European Social Fund under the Regional Operational Programs of the Program Period 2014-2020*).

8.2 Identification of planned policy measures

All the surveys and studies mentioned in the previous chapters, such as Eurostat and ELSTAT surveys (EU-SILC, Health Survey), the “Deep dive on child poverty and social exclusion in Greece: Unmet needs and access barriers” by UNICEF, the study of IOBE (see Annex ^{xviii}) and others point to the need to take specialized measures for the following vulnerable groups of children (specified in detail in Section 4 of the NAP).

8.2.1. All groups of "children in need"

For all children in need, as this group is defined under the European Child Guarantee, there is provision for actions on *early childhood care, education and extracurricular activities, psychosocial support and healthy nutrition*.

In detail, concerning *early childhood education*, the intention is to reform the access system and upgrade the services offered by early childhood centers, focusing on the development and inclusion of a uniform and universal curriculum in all public and private centers of the country for infants and toddlers aged from 2.5 months to 4 years through the implementation of the Program "Kipseli" (*budget: €11,687,000/ source of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund*).

As for the access requirements, relevant legislation has been passed, namely the provision of article 104 of law 4941/2022 GG A 113 titled: "Promoting and Supporting children for their integration in early childhood education, as well as for the access of school-age children, adolescents and disabled persons to creative activity services", which establishes the right of access to the service for children belonging to the target-groups of the Child Guarantee Recommendation, as well as the right of access to high-quality early childhood care services for vulnerable children.

The Program "Kipseli" includes actions in two intervention areas: the content of the service, by the establishment of a holistic educational program in all nurseries, creches and early childhood centers of the country, and the infrastructures, by increasing the daycare places for infants and toddlers.

The objective of the program "Kipseli", as provided for in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on high-quality early childhood education and care systems [2019 C1 89/4], is to ensure educational continuum and provide high-quality services to children, leading to their equal development and more balanced development of their communities, through the early childhood education curriculum. Namely, there is provision for mandatory introduction of the "Kipseli" Program in order to regulate the quality of services provided by the structures and strengthen the relation between the family and the early childhood center, as well as to detect any difficulties, disabilities or/and other disorders at an early stage.

The universal implementation of "Kipseli" Program, planned to be completed in September 2023, shall be preceded by a pilot implementation in the last four months of 2022. Besides, in the context of "Kipseli", there is also funding from the Recovery Fund for the program's educational material that will be made available to the early childhood centers, as well as for training of the professionals who will support the implementation of "Kipseli" in the field [train the trainers scheme] for a period of two years from commencement of the program.

These interventions are accompanied by individual actions, such as adequate training for the early childhood education professionals, as well as provision of the necessary material for implementation of the educational program 'Kipseli'. Finally, they are also accompanied by supplementary actions such as the development of the early intervention system, financed by the Recovery Fund, for the diagnosis of disabilities [via the implementation of 'Kipseli'].

In parallel, the establishment of new nurseries or/and new sections of existing early childhood centers and, thus, the respective generation of places for infants aged from 2 months up to 2.5 years, is an infrastructure and investment project that has been included for implementation and funding from the Recovery Fund. According to the planning, the goal is to finance the establishment of 1,000 such private structures

throughout the country, thus increasing the capacity by 50,000 new places for infants and toddlers (*budget: €145,080,000/ source of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund*).

The need for implementation of this infrastructure project emerged from the fact that the available places in the early childhood centers throughout the country cover around 1/3 of the infants: approximately 30,000 available places for infants in total, whereas the total number of children born every year is around 87,000-89,000, according to the relevant reports of ELSTAT. Therefore, the implementation of this project achieves higher availability of the service in an increased percentage of existing places by at least 50%. The set of the aforementioned interventions ensure adequacy of available places in structures providing early childhood education and care services, the necessary means for the children's socio-emotional development, and resources to address the need of access to the said services for the most vulnerable persons. Therefore, all four principles are ensured: availability, accessibility, adequacy and adaptability of the early childhood education and care services.

In more detail, concerning the *education and extracurricular activities*, with the specific objective of familiarizing children with math, science and robotics courses, with emphasis on gender, there is provision for establishment of new Creative Activity Centers for Children, the STEM CACCs, which shall provide creative activity services through digital technology and positive sciences (math, science, robotics etc) (*budget: 184.04 million euro/source of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund*).

Furthermore, in the context of promoting active inclusion, in view of promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and engagement, actions are envisaged for the participation of disadvantaged groups of children in sports, culture and active social life (for example: membership fees for gyms, conservatories, sports and cultural clubs, theater tickets, day camps – summer camps, etc) (*budget: €12,626,288 already budgeted for the Regions of Attica and Central Macedonia, where there is high concentration of children in precarious conditions, as well as in Peloponnese, Thessaly, Sterea Ellada, Crete and N. Aegean / source of funding: Public Expenditure, ESF+ actions under regional programs*), as well as innovative cultural activities for excluded -for several reasons- groups of the population (*budget: €1,000,000 for the above actions / source of funding: Public Expenditure, ESF+ actions under 'Human Resources & social Cohesion'*). Especially for particularly vulnerable adolescents who live in disadvantaged areas of the country, there is provision for interventions to support them stay in education, participate in community activities and citizenship, support their family environment etc. (*budget: €12,905,684 / source of funding: PUBLIC EXPENDITURE / ESF+ ACTIONS UNDER REGIONAL PROGRAMS*).

In the field of *health*, the plan is to enlarge the National Newborns Screening Program to include other rare diseases or pathogenic conditions in the context of early diagnosis and treatment of children during the first days of life. (*Source of funding: state budget*).

Finally, concerning the improvement of access to *healthy nutrition*, a key priority is the prevention of child obesity. In this context, the elaboration of a National Action Plan against child obesity for "children in need" is planned (*part of the €800,000 from the Technical Support Instrument -TSI*). In this area, one key intervention is the

implementation of the National Program for Promotion of Physical Exercise and Healthy Eating, aimed at control and management of the risk factors related to bad diet and lack of exercise under the National Program for Prevention “Spyros Doxiadis”, which includes actions targeted to all students of Primary and Secondary education in the country, giving priority to students in areas with high poverty rate (*source of funding: PA 2021-2027*). The program includes, among others, educational programs and an information & awareness-raising campaign (details in the National Nutrition Policy Plan). Moreover, further regulatory measures are designed to promote breastfeeding, concerning the establishment and operation of breastfeeding facilities and the creation of a breastfeeding-friendly work environment. In parallel, legislative initiatives are being elaborated, to enhance the establishment of Human Milk Banks and create a register of health professionals for the promotion of breastfeeding.

In the area of *housing*, in view of elaborating an integrated policy framework, a study shall be conducted to map the current state of housing policy actions for vulnerable groups with emphasis on social solidarity. In parallel, the pilot program titled “Establishment of a social/ affordable housing network” has come under the Recovery and Resilience Fund, which will be implemented in the Municipalities of Athens and Thessaloniki (*budget: €1,500,000/ source of funding: Recovery Fund (RRF)*). The goal of the suggested intervention is the prevention and management of the housing exclusion of vulnerable groups of the population who are threatened by or are in lack of housing, by including part of the inactive private and public housing stock in an affordable rental housing scheme.

8.2.2. Children living in non-urban, remote, rural and mountain areas

For Children living in non-urban, remote, rural and mountain areas, in view of improving access to *education*, it is suggested to ensure internet connection/access. To improve access to *health*, it is suggested to establish mobile units, with adequate technical equipment and staffing, for the provision of pediatric, ophthalmology and dental services on the Greek islands and other semi-mountainous mainland areas, as well to grant vouchers for children’s travel for specialist treatments (*suggested actions from the National Coordinator*)

8.2.3 Migrant children and children of minority or ethnic origin (Roma children)

For migrant children and Roma children, or children of minority or ethnic origin, in the context of improving access to early childhood education, support actions are planned for participation in the compulsory two-year preschool education (*budget: €4,000,000/ sources of funding: Public Expenditure, ESF+ actions under ‘Human Resources & Social Cohesion’*).

Concerning the compulsory *education*, to ensure equal access and completion of high-quality and inclusive education, provision is made for supporting the regular school attendance of Roma and vulnerable social group students (*budget PA 2021-2027: The budget has not been specified for the new Program period. Source of funding: Program ‘Human Resources & Social Cohesion’ (Public Expenditure: Co-financing ESF+ and national resources) and additional non-eligible national resources*) and the elaboration/upgrading of educational material for the acquisition of skills by these students (*budget: €900,000/ sources of funding: Public expenditure / ESF+ actions under ‘Human Resources & Social Cohesion’*).

At the same time, a special program is designed for Greek-language learning, employability and counselling for unaccompanied children, and a pilot program for teaching Romani, so that the educational system can better respond to the needs of these children *[budget: €60,000 (2022-2025, 4 schools up to 5,000 per year for the action plan of each school) Source of funding: Council of Europe]*.

In the field of **out-of-school (extracurricular) activities**, there is provision for development of support interventions for Roma children in experiential workshops and children's camps in 5 Regions (West Macedonia, Thessaly, Sterea Ellada, Peloponnese & Attica), which shall contribute in eliminating discriminations and promoting equal opportunities for social integration *(budget: €2,896,223/ source of funding: PUBLIC EXPENDITURE / ESF+ ACTIONS UNDER REGIONAL PROGRAMS)*. To improve access to **health**, there is provision for development of health support programs for these groups in their settlements and living structures (Roma settlements, refugee structures etc), including counselling services and support for the implementation of public health and hygiene measures (Southern Aegean) *(budget: part of a total Budget - €800,000 with other actions/ Source of funding: ESF+ actions under regional programs)*. Moreover, for unaccompanied minors, the operation of Mobile Primary Healthcare Units is expected, for early fulfilment of their needs, which will be offering specialized services in addition to those provided by the regional and local Primary Healthcare System *(budget and source of funding to be confirmed)*.

8.2.4. Children with disabilities

Actions improving access to early childhood care and education and social life are envisaged for children with disabilities. In particular, concerning **early childhood care**, under the “Reform of the early childhood intervention framework (ECI) for children with disabilities” there is provision for technical assistance (DG Reform – Technical Support Instrument) to assess the impact of the new early intervention model in Greece, analyze current legal frameworks on the support of young children with disabilities, analyze the needs of early intervention service providers, elaborate an Action Plan for implementation of high-quality early intervention services, develop a customized plan for the support of children and families, training of the providers’ staff etc. *(Budget: €300,000 from DG Reform-Technical Support Instrument funding)*. This reform will be implemented initially via a pilot program with vouchers for the provision of customized treatment/education programs *(budget: 34.3 million euro. Source of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund)*.

Concerning **education**, there is planning to support pupils with disabilities in Preschool and Primary Education, by using Information & Communication Technologies for Kindergartens and Elementary Schools *(budget: €2,000,000/ source of funding: ESF+ actions under ‘Human Resources & social Cohesion’)*. A landmark in achieving social inclusion of children with disabilities, has been the recent introduction of the Personal Assistant for disabled persons above the age of 16 and the implementation of the pilot program “Personal Assistant for Persons with Disabilities” that will contribute decisively to improving their quality of life, enhancing their independent living, their equal participation in society and preventing their marginalization and institutionalization *(Budget: 2021: €5,442,800, 2022: €10,238,000, 2023: €6,710,000, 2024: €19,800,000 Recovery and Resilience Fund, and for the period 2025-2030 ESF+/Regional Programs- After the intervention*

period of the Recovery and Resilience Fund, ESF+ shall cover the entire financing of the program via the Regional Programs of the program period 2021-2027).

Particularly for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), a comprehensive intervention is being designed for their social integration through implementation of the following actions: financing in the form of vouchers for early childhood intervention, development of typical functioning protocols and procedures, information campaign and targeted counselling and training for adolescents and adults with ASD (*Source of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund Budget: 9.2 million euro. It has been suggested to include this project in the Sectoral Operational program 'Development and Social Cohesion' of the Program Period PA 2021-2027 objective 1.4.k with a total budget of €84.6 million / the objective is linked to the Youth Guarantee / sectoral program 'Development of Human Resources and Social Cohesion' with total budget €939 million).*

8.2.5. Children in institutional care

For children living in institutions, there is provision for actions using the tools, methodologies and results developed under the Pilot Program Child Guarantee Phase III, where Greece participates.

The designed policy is focused on the following pillars:

- the prevention pillar, by creating a system to prevent institutionalisation and support the biological family,
- the de-institutionalisation pillar, by activating a system for transition to community services, and also through foster care, including professional foster care, with emphasis on supporting the foster family to integrate the foster child in the new family environment, and
- the pillar of alternative forms of living in the community.

The first pillar includes:

- training of professionals in the social services of the Municipalities (social workers, psychologists) in terms of identifying and supporting the biological family and the children, utilizing the tools and methodology to be developed by the pilot Child Guarantee, Phase III, in view of preventing the removal of the child from the biological environment (*Source of Funding: ESF+ Sectoral Program 'Human Resources & Social Cohesion'- horizontal systemic actions priority 1.4.h)*
- structural organization of the welfare services on the Municipality level with the specific responsibility of child protection (*Source of Funding: ESF+ Sectoral Program 'Human Resources & Social Cohesion'- horizontal systemic actions priority 1.4.h and 1.4.k)*
- In any case, the actions are accompanied by awareness-raising and information actions for the local community about the advantages of de-institutionalization.

The second pillar includes:

- transformation of residential institutions to open-type child protection services (*Source of Funding: ESF+ Regional Programs, total estimated budget 12.5 million for the entire program period PA 21-27.*
- introduction of a system to monitor foster care and the respective training of social protection professionals using the tools and methodology to be developed by the

pilot Child Guarantee Phase III (*Source of Funding: ESF+ Sectoral Program 'Human Resources & social Cohesion' - horizontal systemic actions priority 1.4.h and 1.4.k*).

- In any case, the actions are accompanied by awareness-raising and information activities for the local community about the advantages of de-institutionalization.

The third pillar envisages the following:

- Immediate activation of the alternative community structure through semi-autonomous living structures for adolescents living in institutions, as well as for adolescents in precarious conditions (*budget: €2,176,471/ source of funding: OP and ESF+ ACTIONS UNDER REGIONAL PROGRAMS /Recovery & Resilience Fund*)

- immediate activation of the professional foster care institution, by creating the register of professional foster caregivers (*budget: €6,773,976/ Recovery and Resilience Fund*).

In addition, in synergy with the above policies, especially for children with disabilities:

- development of an early diagnosis and early intervention system applying the protocols thereof to support the vulnerable biological family in the context of prevention of institutionalization (*The project in the first phase is financed from the Recovery Fund, while subsequently the intervention is included as horizontal systemic under priority 1.4.k. of the Program 'Development of Human Resources & Social Cohesion', total budget €84.6 million*).

9. SUPPORTING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Greece has a wide range of social welfare programs and benefits as well as a comprehensive legal policy framework that support the vulnerable population. The supporting policy framework for addressing intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage mainly comprises four categories of (existing and planned) measures. In particular:

9.1. Measures supporting parents/guardians' access to adequate resources

9.1.1. Minimum guaranteed income scheme (MGIS)

This is a welfare program aimed at households living in extreme poverty and combines three pillars: a) income support (*budget: €727,000,000 for 2022/ source of funding: state budget*), b) supplementary social services, benefits and goods (*budget: €400,000,000 / source of funding: ESF+, FEAD*) and c) mobilization actions for labour market integration or reintegration. In addition, the Operational Program for Food and Basic Material Assistance (FEAD) supports the MGIS beneficiaries through the distribution of food and basic material goods and is combined with accompanying measures that contribute to the social integration of beneficiaries and are implemented throughout the country.

9.1.2. Other income support policies/programs for families with children

(A) Child allowance: It aims to provide financial support for economically weaker families, with additional benefits for families with children with disabilities (*Budget: €1,102,000,000 for 2022/ source of funding: State budget*).

(B) Birth allowance: It is a program that provides financial support to young mothers as an incentive for having babies (*Budget: €156,500,000 for 2022/ source of funding: State budget*).

(C) Foster care allowance for families registered in the National Register of Approved Foster Families, with the aim of meeting the daily needs of children in foster care and supporting foster families (*Budget: €1,500,000 for 2022/ source of funding: State budget*).

(D) Allowance for families living in deprived and/or mountainous areas which provides income support to families living in mountainous and disadvantaged areas (*Budget: €5,000,000 for 2022/ source of funding: State budget*).

(E) Integrated local action plans to tackle child poverty will provide individualized support for children and parents (counselling, referrals and follow-up), organization of awareness-raising workshops, development of participatory activities, creation of a network of cooperation with the local community, etc. (*Budget: €23,501,188/ sources of funding: ESF+, ROP*).

(F) Benefit policy for persons with disabilities: on certain conditions and provided that a certain degree and form of disability has been verified by the Disability Certification Centers (KEPA), there is provision for granting special disability allowances to persons suffering from specific or/and rare diseases or forms of disability or special cases of severe disability (cash assistance, meal allowance, travel allowance) (*state budget*).

9.1.3. Promotion of labour market integration

Concerning the promotion of labour market integration, the actions are focused on the design of childcare and education services, adaptation of the working environment driven by the parents' professional commitments, and employability promotion policies. The Program "Work-Life Balance" has contributed to this effect up to the school year 2021-2022 with a budget of €279,000,000. Already, the "Neighbourhood Nannies" program (in pilot implementation) is being implemented for the care of babies from the age of two months to 2.5 years (*Budget: €3,000,000/ source of funding: To be identified for the implementation of the NSRF*). The program provides for financial support to working - mainly - parents, single parents, foster carers and the families in general across the board, for the care of their child or children, either at home or in the house of a childminder/guardian. In order to facilitate access to the labour market, a special program envisages the creation of crèches within large companies (*Budget: 14.27 million euro/ source of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund*). In addition, the establishment and implementation of full-day schooling facilitates access to employment and the reconciliation of family and working life for mothers (*Budget: State Budget 2022-2023: 125,357,706 - sources of funding: NSRF 2014-2020, ESF, OP "Human Resources Development, Education & Lifelong Learning" PA 2021-2027, budget: Has not been identified for 2021-2027. Source of funding: Program 'Human Resources & Social Cohesion' (Public Expenditure: Co-financing ESF+ and national resources) and additional non-eligible national resources*).

At the same time, in order to reconcile work and family life, a significant number of leaves and facilities are provided for parents, especially mothers, who work in the public sector in any category of employment. At the same time, Directive 1158/2019 was transposed into national legislation by Law no. 4808/2021 regulating issues for employees in the public and private sector with regard to paternity leave, parental leave, childcare leave, leave of absence for fathers to raise their child and payment of working fathers during such leaves. In addition, it is worth noting that there has been provision for special leave for civil servant parents whose children attended schools that were suspended due to the restrictive measures to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the context of the above measures, teleworking was established as a priority area for the reconciliation/streamlining of personal and professional life.

Finally, special programs are implemented in order to promote labour market integration and reintegration, vocational training for vulnerable groups of unemployed persons (*PA 2021-2027*), with emphasis on new beneficiaries of child protection structures and underage offenders (*source of funding: Youth Employment Initiative – OP Human Resources Development Social Cohesion 2021-2027*), as well as on youth not in employment, education or training (*source of funding: ESF+ Sectoral program Human Resources & Social Cohesion Specific Priority 5*).

9.2. Policy measures on quality services for children, including the development of infrastructure and a skilled workforce

In the development of a child-friendly *justice system*, the establishment and operation of Child Protection Offices ("Children's Home") was foreseen in the structural set-up of certain Security Sub-Directorates. In this context, actions are being implemented to promote and strengthen the participation of children in criminal proceedings and to apply procedural guarantees for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings (*Budget: €417,955.91/ source of funding: partly national funds*). Furthermore, two actions are foreseen to inform children about their rights in the context of a child-friendly justice system, namely the creation of a website and the operation of a dedicated helpline. Specific measures are foreseen to strengthen juvenile facilities (*Budget: €180,000*) and upgrade the services provided by the facilities operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice (*Budget: €282,850*). At the same time, in order to effectively address domestic violence incidents, the establishment and operation of Domestic Violence Response Services throughout the country has been introduced (*source of funding: state budget*), as well as the establishment and operation of Domestic Violence Response Offices (in Attica and Thessaloniki), in order to ensure the effective handling of such cases by appropriately trained staff and to improve the services provided. The operation of the services is accompanied by additional operational actions. In this context, specific actions are also being implemented to address disappearances of minors and the treatment of minors who are users of illegal substances (*Source of funding: state budget*).

In particular, in the context of measures for the modernization of *social protection systems*, Law 4837/2021 established a framework for the prevention and treatment of incidents of child abuse and neglect applicable to all institutions providing social care services to children, e.g. nurseries. In addition, the establishment of uniform conditions for the establishment and operation of child protection and care units by

non-profit legal entities of private law is planned (*source of funding: no expense incurred*). In this context, the development of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is also planned.

Furthermore, the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors plans to develop and establish the framework of specifications for their operation alongside the supervision and evaluation program for unaccompanied minors accommodation facilities (budget: 1,596,078 / *sources of funding: European Economic Area Funding Mechanism 2014-2021 - EEA Grants*).

Finally, a regulatory intervention is planned in order to define uniform requirements for the access of children, especially “children in need”, to the public Pre-School Care Units (*Budget: pending*). Moreover, with a view to improving and *modernizing the basic infrastructure*, special development programs at local government level are being implemented (SPECIAL PROGRAM PHILODIMOS II, Special Development Program "Antonis Tritsis"), namely:

- special technical projects in municipalities for the construction and improvement of primary and secondary education infrastructure (*Special Program PHILODIMOS II, budget 1) call II repair, maintenance of school buildings & yards and other actions €50,000,000 2) call VIII Elaboration of studies and implementation of fire-protection measures and equipment in the schools of the country €52,500,000, total amount of decisions included by 30/12/2021 and Special Development Program for A' and B' degree Local Authorities, associations of Municipalities and Legal Persons/ Development and Solidarity Program for Local Government "Antonis Tritsis" Call AT10 "Open air spaces" includes, among others, repair and maintenance of school buildings, TOTAL BUDGET €40,000,000, TOTAL BUDGET OF PROPOSALS €198,416,723, TOTAL BUDGET OF APPROVED PROPOSALS €14,521,555 Ministry of Interior*)
- their adaptation to ensure accessibility for children with physical disabilities (*Special Program PHILODIMOS II, budget: €35,000,000, Call IX: Construction of ramps and sanitary spaces for access and facilitation of Disabled Persons in schools, TOTAL AMOUNT OF DECISIONS INCLUDED BY 30/12/2021 €16,887,082 Ministry of Interior*)
- reshaping of sports facilities (*Special Program PHILODIMOS II Call IV: Construction, repair and maintenance of sports facilities of Municipalities BUDGET €162,500,000, TOTAL AMOUNT OF DECISIONS INCLUDED BY 30/12/2021 €160,689,939.97 Ministry of Interior*) and
- playgrounds (*Special Program PHILODIMOS II, Call III: procurement-installation of equipment for the upgrading of playgrounds in the Country's municipalities BUDGET €70,000,000, TOTAL AMOUNT OF DECISIONS INCLUDED BY 30/12/2021 €69,008,529.34, Special Development Program for A' and B' degree Local Authorities, associations of Municipalities and Legal Persons/ Development and Solidarity Program for Local Government "Antonis Tritsis" - Call AT10 "Open air spaces" includes, among others, repair and maintenance of municipal open-air sports venues and playgrounds, TOTAL BUDGET €40,000,000 TOTAL BUDGET OF PROPOSALS €198,416,723, TOTAL BUDGET OF APPROVED PROPOSALS €14,521,555 Ministry of Interior*). Furthermore, supplementary accessibility and safety interventions will take place in houses, workplaces, social welfare services and communal areas for disabled persons, in view of promoting their social integration (*budget 2022: €3,700,000, 2023: €8,300,000, 2024: €8,000,000, 2025: €4,000,000/ sources of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund*), while there is also provision for enhancing independent living by subsidizing works in public buildings and private houses (*budget: €21,600,000.67/*

sources of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund), in accordance with the provisions under the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In the area of *digital infrastructure*, a horizontal action is in progress that includes digital transformation of the social support system via digitalization of OPEKA (Organization for Welfare Benefits and Social Solidarity) in view of rationalizing the social welfare benefits system, simplifying the procedures and reducing bureaucracy, improving the response to citizens' requests and providing optimal information and services to the current or future beneficiaries of citizen allowance (*budget: €6,250,000 / sources of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund*). In parallel, aiming at holistic improvement of the services provided to citizens, with particular consideration for the access of disabled persons, the digital transformation of the Disability Certification Center (KEPA) is implemented, so as to simplify the administrative procedures. Moreover, in the context of enhancing the de-institutionalization efforts, the plan is to further develop and promote the digital system of foster care and adoption (anynet.gr) (*budget: €2,300,000/ source of funding: ESF+*). Finally, special mention should be made of the creation of a Single National Digital Platform for the collection and uniform compilation of the administrative data necessary for monitoring the implementation of the Recommendation. This horizontal measure, which will enable the monitoring of the progress of actions and work under the NAP, will be financed by the Technical Support Instrument (*budget: part of €800,000 from TSI*).

In the same direction of ensuring high-quality services, actions aimed at professional training and *further training of staff* are being implemented. In particular, training actions are foreseen on the methods of dealing with violence against women with disabilities for staff working in shelters for victims of domestic violence as well as the training of public officials in dealing with sexual abuse of children. To promote the social integration and inclusion of Roma, the implementation of large-scale training courses is designed, on topics such as interculturalism, elimination of stereotypes and discrimination for workers in the wider public and private sector, in cooperation with Roma organizations (*Source of funding: NSRF Strategic Structure Social Solidarity OP Human Resources Development, Training and Lifelong Learning 2021-2027*).

The goal is to improve the relation between the state support structures and social services providers across the public and private sector and the Roma population and eliminate stereotypic and racist attitudes, as well as to improve mutual communication, in order to promote unprejudiced treatment of Roma in a spirit of equality, acceptance of difference and promotion of their non-discriminatory integration within the social fabric.

Moreover, in the context of new social protection policies (de-institutionalization, foster care, early childhood education), there is planning for education and training of all human resources involved in institutional-operational support, reorganization in the area of welfare / social integration (*source of funding: ESF+ HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT – HORIZONTAL SYSTEMIC ACTIONS - PRIORITY 1.4.h*). To facilitate the broader digital transformation, supplementary actions are foreseen in the area of digital training and upskilling courses for staff providing welfare services, which are expected to contribute to the digital training of employees and allow citizens to benefit from digital services (*budget: €1,050,000 /source of funding: Recovery and Resilience Fund*).

For educators, there is induction training for newly-hired teachers (*budget: €2,327,822.67/ sources of funding: NSRF*), training for educators hired in schools with

children who are migrants/refugees, Roma, from vulnerable social groups etc. (*budget: €900,000 / Source of funding: PUBLIC EXPENDITURE / ESF+ ACTIONS UNDER 'HUMAN RESOURCES & SOCIAL COHESION'*), as well as actions of special training in differentiated teaching and the inclusive intercultural education principles (*budget: €701,825.05/ sources of funding: NSRF-European Social Fund*). Also, in the field of education it is planned to generalize two-year compulsory education through the staffing of schools with teachers (*budget: €24,762,830/ sources of funding: Public Expenditure /ESF+ Actions under 'Human Resources & Social Cohesion'*).

Ongoing education and training in specialized subjects is also foreseen for Juvenile Probation Officers (*sources of funding: budget of the Training Institute-INEP, state budget, NSRF program*), along with training of new employees of the "Children's Home" in the Structured Protocol for the forensic examination of juvenile victims of sexual offences during criminal proceedings. Finally, numerous training courses are carried out for the staff of the Hellenic Police: General training on juvenile issues and more specific training on human trafficking, protection of children's rights in view of refugee and migration flows and training of police officers in domestic violence issues (*Source of funding: State budget*).

In addition to the training actions, in relation to ensuring adequate and qualified staff, particular mention should be made to the reinforcement of the administrative capacity of the National Center for Social Solidarity – EKKA, as the competent National Coordinator for The Child Guarantee (*source of funding: ESF+ 'Human Resources & Social Cohesion' Indicative budget (including VAT) for five (5) years: €3,040,000*).

9.3. Measures to address poverty and social exclusion due to geographical barriers

For children living in non-urban, remote areas, actions are planned to improve their access to health and education services (see Section 8.2.2). At the same time, for migrant children, children of minority or ethnic origin and Roma children, actions are envisaged which aim to improve their access to pre-school and compulsory education services, actions aimed at improving housing conditions (see Section 8.2.3), as well as policy actions targeted to children in disadvantaged rural areas, marginalized urban areas and remote areas or settlements.

9.4. Measures to ensure that services are developed and provided in an inclusive and equitable manner

The existing legal framework ensures in a number of provisions equal participation and equal access of children to services in order to avoid stigmatization and segregation of children in need. To this end, actions are foreseen targeted at groups of children at risk of stigmatization and exclusion from access to services. However, the shortcomings in the implementation of the programs make it difficult to move toward effective inclusion and hinder the achievement of equal opportunities.

Community Centers and Poverty Structures are services intended to ensure social integration of all vulnerable groups of the population. During the program period NSRF 2014-2020, 245 Community Centers and 274 Poverty Structures were established and financed. For the Community Centers, a study will be conducted to assess their intervention during the revision of the PA 2021-2027 regional programs;

moreover, in the context of their current operation, services are activated to support vulnerable families on the community level and implement programs for preventing and combating institutionalization and de-institutionalization. (*Budget: 2024: 50,700,000 (2025, 2026, 2027: 47,700,000 per year) Total Budget of the Action: 195,000,000 European Social Fund / Regional Operational Programs*). In addition, Social Support Centers (in Athens, Piraeus and Thessaloniki) operate in this field, providing direct counselling and psychological support to children in need (*Source of funding: ESF/State Budget /PIP*). For children living in institutions, as part of the promotion of deinstitutionalization, comprehensive counselling support and social inclusion/housing rehabilitation actions are implemented, in particular for young people aged 15 to 24, with the aim of providing counselling support during the first years of deinstitutionalization (*budget: €15,000,000 for the entire program period 2021-2027/ source of funding: ROP PA 2021-2027*).

For Roma children, the Roma branches of Community Centers offer reception, support and liaison services in the context of policies to protect them from poverty and social exclusion (*budget: €100,000; average annual cost per Branch / source of funding: NSRF-ESF/ROP*). Specific actions are foreseen to eliminate social exclusion of Roma women and girls by providing information and empowerment on early and forced marriages as well as on children's rights. It is proposed to set up additional mobile units for Community Centers with Roma branches, aiming at informing them about their rights and the procedures for issuing official documents (e.g. registration of infants in the Registry Office, birth certificates, etc.), the necessity of integration in the educational process and extracurricular activities, healthy nutrition, sexual information for young girls, etc. (*budget to be finalized and source of funding to be confirmed*).

For children of refugees and migrants, the plan is to extend geographically the Migrant Integration Centers to more Municipalities with large refugee and migrant populations, as well as to reinforce their operation with additional staff and more integration actions, including the strengthening of intercultural mediation (*source of funding: European Social Fund / Regional Operational Programs*). For unaccompanied children, in particular, the continuation of the program "National Guardianship System for Unaccompanied Minors" by the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors will be implemented as a horizontal measure (*budget: €6,259,200/ source of funding: National Program Migration & Domestic Affairs Fund-TAMEY*) in parallel with the design and implementation of a national certification program for conducting the child's best interest assessment (*budget: no expense incurred*). Finally, more specific actions are foreseen to facilitate the transition of migrant children into adulthood by developing an assessment tool to evaluate the knowledge and skills of unaccompanied minors over 15 years of age, along with the implementation of a project to exchange good practices on the transition of migrant children into adulthood in order to promote long-term improvements in the quality of support (*budget: €106,604/ source of funding: DG HOME/AMIF 2020*).

To promote equal access of persons with disability, interventions are planned on several levels, in synergy with the National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Firstly, codification and recast of the legislation is in progress, as well as transposition of EU Directives for persons with disabilities. In parallel, there is planning for upgrading and improving the operation of the current system for disability assessment and certification by breakthrough-measures to enhance the

services of the Disability Certification Centers (KEPA) promoting an interdisciplinary and rights-based approach to disability. The electronic disability card will also be piloted in 2022, aiming to further facilitate the daily life of disabled persons, as well as to ensure effective and evidence-based design of public policy via interconnection of the Electronic Disability Card with the “National Benefits Portal” (*budget: 3,280,000/year*).

In the area of education, a set of actions aims at promoting inclusive education and ensuring equal access of students with disabilities or/and special educational needs. Namely, there is provision for revision of the applicable legal framework on education of Disabled Persons, projects to enhance the environmental and learning accessibility with facilities and adjustments in the environment, the assistive technology and the educational material, and reinforcement of the Educational and Counselling Support Centers with assets and infrastructure and psychometric tools (*budget: €459,665.54*). In view of enhancing digital accessibility, accessible digital educational material will be designed and developed for all students with disabilities or/and special educational needs for the Primary and Secondary vocational Education (*budget: €3,500,000, NSRF 2014-2020, OP “Human Resources Development, Education & Lifelong Learning”*). PA 2021-2027: *The budget for the new Program Period has not been specified. Source of funding: Program ‘Human Resources & Social Cohesion’ (Public Expenditure: Co-financing ESF+ and national resources) and additional non-eligible national resources*. In this area, an Inclusive Education Guide was developed and is being piloted in schools. In order to upgrade inclusive education, the mainstream education curricula are being updated driven by the inclusive education principles, and curricula for special education schools are being elaborated, to meet the contemporary educational needs of students with disabilities. Finally, in the context of the pilot implementation of the Child Guarantee, a pilot program is being developed for the establishment of inclusive school communities. As regards the linking of adolescents with disabilities to the labour market, actions are planned for the "social inclusion of people with autism spectrum disorders", which includes targeted counselling and training and a direct link to the programs of the Employment and Labour Organization (current name: Public Employment Agency-DYPA). *This project is included in the Recovery Fund and subsequently in the Sectoral Operational Program ‘Human Resources & Social Cohesion’ Specific Priority 5*. Addressing the stigma requires more specific measures to prevent and combat discrimination, focusing on information and awareness among the general public. Similar interventions are foreseen for gender equality and the prevention and combating of violence against women, the prevention and combating of gender-based violence and abuse of women and girls with disabilities, and in particular domestic violence and sexual exploitation. In this context, Counselling Centers for women victims of violence and multiple discrimination are operating at regional and local level to support them and raise awareness, prevent and combat violence against women (*source of funding: European Social Fund (ESF), State Budget*).

10. EU FUNDING

EU Partnership Agreement for Regional Development 2021-2027 (PA): A key pillar of PA 2021-2027 is the objective for a more Social Europe, which implements the European Pillar of Social Rights and supports quality employment, education, skills,

social inclusion and equal access to healthcare. It is in this context that the "Child Guarantee" strategy was launched, aiming at providing guidance and tools for Member States to support children at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a "European Child Guarantee" calls on Member States to give priority to EU funding for children's rights based on needs identified at national, regional and local level.

The revised proposal of the European Social Fund (ESF+) Regulation for the 2021-2027 program period includes a new requirement to mobilize at least 5% of ESF+ resources, under shared management, to tackle child poverty. In Greece, this objective is expected to be achieved through actions co-financed under the sectoral program "Human Resources Development and Social Cohesion" and the 13 Regional Programs, whereas the approved PA 2021-2027 sets a thematic concentration target for the implementation of the "European Child Guarantee", through targeted actions and structural reforms to tackle child poverty, at a minimum of 8%.

Member States are encouraged to allocate all possible national resources, which will be complemented by EU funds such as the European Social Fund+ (ESF+), the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion (ReactEU), the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), InvestEU, Erasmus+ and the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF), the EU4Health program and the Next generation EU to combat child poverty and social exclusion.

In Greece, a proposal for actions has been submitted:

A) ESF+ under 'Human Resources & Social Cohesion' (2021-2027) falling within the social integration policy that also includes the specific policy for implementation of the "European Child Guarantee" in the areas of intervention of the competent Ministries of Education & Religions, Labour & Social Affairs and Culture & Sports. **Total budget:** for the 'Human Resources & Social Cohesion' the amounts are: EU funding €160,202,701 / Public Expenditure €195,717,395.

It should be noted that, in addition to the above actions, the following are envisaged/expected:

- Studies and research on the implementation of social protection and inclusion policies under the European Pillar of Social Rights (child abuse, deinstitutionalization), studies to assess the effects of policies on social inclusion, poverty and social exclusion problems;
- horizontal actions that will contribute to enhancing the administrative and management capacity of Social Welfare Services, Executive Structures and Health Institutions with a view to improving affordability and accessibility to health care for socially vulnerable groups, to strengthen prevention and health promotion, including mental health, for particularly vulnerable groups, family and child care with the aim of ensuring equal access for citizens;
- development of new approaches and implementation of cross-cutting systemic actions for the social inclusion of migrants, including the integration/inclusion of migrant children – beneficiaries of international protection;
- capacity building of civil society structures and organizations with regard to new tools and techniques for social integration, especially of vulnerable groups, and the promotion of decent living and prospects for children aged 0-17 years.

B) ESF+ IN THE REGIONAL PROGRAMS 2021-2027 under the "European Child Guarantee" policy: Budget by ROP (public expenditure) in all sectors (early childhood

education and care, education, health, nutrition, housing) from the Ministries of Education & Religious, Labour & Social Affairs, Health. Total budget (775.2 million in PE) calculated based on the 1st official submission⁶⁶.

The relevant actions are taken into account or expected to be taken into account in the secondary thematic objective ESF+ 'Tackling Child Poverty' under Ref. 06, which corresponds to the Child Guarantee actions of the programs.

The specific objectives (SO) of the ESF+, according to the ESF+ Regulation, on the basis of which the above actions are planned, are as follows⁶⁷:

- Promoting equal access to high-quality and inclusive education and training and completion thereof, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care to general and vocational education and training and furthermore, to higher education and adult education and training, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for people with disabilities (SO f)
- Promoting active inclusion, with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, especially for disadvantaged groups (SO h)
- Promoting the socio-economic integration of third-country nationals, including migrants (SO i)
- Promoting the socio-economic integration of marginalized communities such as Roma (SO j)
- Enhancing equal and timely access to high-quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote access to housing and people-centered care services (including health care), modernizing social protection systems (including promoting access to social protection), with emphasis on children and disadvantaged groups, improving the accessibility, inter alia for people with disabilities, the effectiveness and resilience of health care systems and long-term care services (SO k)
- Promoting the social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the destitute and children (SO l)

Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF)

Pillar 3.4 of the Greek Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRF) entitled "Increasing access to effective and inclusive social policies" includes the following actions:

A. Reform 2: Child Protection (Ref: 16919)

- Development of an integrated curriculum aimed at the cognitive development of infants and toddlers (3 months to 4 years) (Kipseli) (Reform 1)
- Placement of children with disabilities greater than 67% and/or severe mental illness in the care of professional foster caregivers. (Reform 2)
- Transfer of adolescents and adults from child protection facilities to Assisted Living Facilities (Investment 1)
- Subsidy for the opening/creation of new early care facilities in existing facilities for infants and toddlers from 2 months to 2.5 years (Investment 2)

⁶⁶ The cases of amounts (HR&SC and Regional Programs) refer to actions for the child, not general social integration actions, where the sums are naturally higher.

⁶⁷ Article 4, Regulation EU (2021/1057) establishing the ESF+

- Establishment of a Center of Creative Activities for Children focused on technology (STEM) (Investment 3)

Budget: EUR 184.04 million (excluding VAT)

B. Reform 3: Disability (Ref: 16904) (part of it falls under A11)

- Early intervention (pilot program)
- Supporting the integration of people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

C. Investment 4: Creating nurseries within large companies (Ref. 16945)

This is complementary to A2 and includes the remuneration of 240 workers in 120 nurseries which will operate in:

- 50 enterprises with more than 100 employees, and
- 70 enterprises with more than 250 employees

Budget: EUR 14.27 million (excluding VAT)

The institution of Personal Assistants is part of a broader framework of social support for people with disabilities with a view to their equal integration and participation in society. Budget 2021: €5,442,800,

2022: €10,238,000,

2023: €6,710,000

2024: €19,800,000 (Recovery & Resilience Fund and

ESF+).

Technical Support Instrument

In parallel, Technical Support (DG Reform - Technical Support Instrument) has been approved under the title "Reform of the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) framework for children with disabilities". The Technical Support will contribute, inter alia, to the impact assessment of the new early intervention model in Greece, the analysis of existing legal frameworks for the support of young children with disabilities, the analysis of the needs of early intervention service providers, the drafting of an Action Plan for the implementation of high-quality early intervention services, the development of a personalized support plan for children and families, training of providers' staff, etc. The contractor of the project is: EASPD - European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities. Budget: EUR 300,000.

All the policies for which EU support has been requested [either through the Recovery Fund or through the Structural Funds of the NSRF, in particular ESF+] serve to finance policies of a social nature and dimension, with a structural and modernization component, as the projects concerned constitute an intervention and investment in human resources and as such, facilitate the smooth social integration of children in need with long-term results. In any case, the amounts, particularly for the actions envisaged, will be determined on the basis of the results of the actions and the estimated value of the intervention in question and/or the history of relevant programs or actions, subject to studies being carried out to assess their ultimate economic value.

11. DATA COLLECTION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

11.1 A mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the actions under the National Action Plan for the Child Guarantee

This section describes the framework for data collection, monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the implementation of the Recommendation in Greece. In view of the gaps observed in the availability and collection of the necessary information during the NAP process, the process of data collection, monitoring and evaluation of administrative and statistical data should be upgraded and adapted. This will be ensured in a coherent way, making use of both the Technical Support of DG Reform (TSI) and the Digital Single Portal⁶⁸.

The National Coordinator (E.K.K.A.) is the central body for coordinating the activities of all competent authorities, services and bodies at national, regional and local level⁶⁹ for the European Child Guarantee. The National Coordinator is responsible for the coordination of the actions, policies and services of all the above mentioned bodies related to the Recommendation and for the collection of the necessary data for the monitoring and evaluation of the progress of its implementation. This task is considered particularly important given the complexity of the existing framework, the lack of consolidation of existing policies and services in such a way as to effectively address the shortcomings regarding the access to services falling within the scope of the Recommendation, but also the lack of a single mechanism for the collection of data and information on all categories of children in need in Greece.

As regards coordination at national level, an Inter-ministerial Working Group has been set up where 12 Ministries are represented; this is their contact point with the National Coordinator both in terms of collection of administrative data at central level and policy planning with regard to the envisaged actions. The contact points of the Inter-ministerial Working Group shall inform the National Coordinator of any developments concerning the funding, timetables and any other prerequisite for the effective implementation of the actions under the NAP. Furthermore, they shall inform their respective ministries of the overall progress of the implementation of the NAP. At the same time, the Inter-ministerial Working Group is entrusted with the specific task of ensuring that the implementation of the NAP actions is in line with the implementation of actions under relevant National Action Plans.

With regard to coordination and monitoring at regional and local level, the Network of actors already described in Section 6 (Regions, Municipalities and other actors) has been established. The further use and strengthening of Community Centers and/or other local actors will be completed after the end of the transition phase, in the framework of the relevant Technical Assistance (TSI) study. As part of its coordinating role, E.K.K.A. will process and evaluate the information collected at all levels (national, regional and local) and coordinate administrative procedures in order to facilitate inter-ministerial cooperation with a view to formulating the necessary actions that will ensure the access of vulnerable categories of children to each service area.

⁶⁸ The Single Digital Portal of the Public Administration (gov.gr) is the central point for the provision of digital services (collected from all General Government bodies) compiled in a single public website.

⁶⁹ Article 53, Law 4837/2021.

As regards the collection and uniform recording of the administrative data needed to monitor the implementation of the Recommendation, the commissioning of UNICEF with a study identifying the technical specifications of the Single National Digital Platform has already been approved. In addition to the collection of administrative data from all stakeholders in a uniform way, the platform will also enable the monitoring of the progress of actions and works under the NAP. Communication between partners, monitoring of individual deadlines and other administrative work, such as the scheduling of regular teleconferences at national, regional and local level, will also be possible. The technical specifications of the platform are currently being developed, with the main objective of making them compatible with the framework for data collection, monitoring and evaluation of the Recommendation as described in this chapter.

For the monitoring of the implementation of the Recommendation, the National Coordinator, as Governance Center, will process and evaluate the information collected at all levels (national, regional, local government-municipalities) and coordinate the administrative procedures to facilitate inter-ministerial cooperation in order to formulate the necessary actions for the access of each vulnerable category to relevant services.

For the processing and analysis of administrative and statistical data and information, the National Coordinator will be reinforced shortly in terms of resources and specialized staff. In particular, it is proposed to create a Data Analysis Department within the E.K.K.A. with the main focus on the monitoring and analysis of administrative and statistical information (monitoring indicators, statistical data, administrative data and data of the Single National Digital Platform).

As regards the design of the necessary actions at central level, the National Coordinator will ensure that the planning of actions shall include the following elements:

- Identification of the content of the action to be implemented, its objectives and intended results
- Identification of its cost and source of funding
- A detailed timetable for implementation
- Assessment of the need for the intervention accompanied by evidence-based documentation
- Identification of the legislative or regulatory actions required for its implementation and the responsible implementing bodies.

The evaluation of the actions and policies implemented will be facilitated through the operation of the platform, in conjunction with the use of the EU and national statistical sources and indicators listed below, which are laid out in more detail in the Annexes^{xix} & ^{xx}. The above actions and procedures of the National Monitoring Mechanism will also allow for the updating of the NAP.

Moreover, the Technical Support of DG Reform (TSI) provides for an effective monitoring and evaluation framework for children in poverty and social exclusion, including the technical requirements for the creation of a register of children in need. In this context, there will be mapping of data and administrative procedures regarding children in need. In other words, a review will be made: a) of the data/information collected currently on children in need (and on poverty and social exclusion in general), on several levels of governance and from different stakeholders, and b) of how these data are used for analysis/monitoring purposes.

11.2 Collection of statistical data

As indicated in the previous sections and the technical studies used for drafting the NAP (“Deep dive on child poverty and social exclusion in Greece: Unmet Needs and Access Barriers” by UNICEF and the IOBE study), the lack of systematic data collection and the absence of targeted surveys by case and geographical location make it difficult to identify actual needs, accessibility problems and ultimately, to develop proposals for the adoption of specific measures for each vulnerable category of children and for all children in need.

It is therefore considered imperative to strengthen the monitoring and data collection mechanisms within the national system, including the use of existing administrative data, and to work with ELSTAT to adapt the general and specific (ad hoc) surveys already being implemented in order to improve the availability and disaggregation of data regarding vulnerable groups of children. In particular, in addition to the establishment of the Single National Digital Platform at administrative level, it is proposed to examine the feasibility of the following projects, in cooperation with ELSTAT:

1. Conducting a nationwide sample survey specifically focused on children in order to record needs and barriers and map the gaps of relevant services across the territory. The design of the survey should also ensure a representative recording of the experiences of children living in geographically remote areas of the country.
2. Alternatively, the extension of the sample and questionnaires of regular surveys conducted at national and European level to allow for scientifically sound conclusions to be drawn by target group, service sector and geographical area.
3. Conducting ad hoc surveys to identify accessibility problems of vulnerable groups of children for whom data are not collected in the context of existing surveys (such as Roma children living in non-standard housing, homeless children, etc.)

11.3 Monitoring and evaluation indicators

In line with the European Commission's guidelines, the monitoring and evaluation process should be based both on the analysis of data collected in a harmonized way across the EU (as in the EU-SILC survey) and on data from administrative and statistical sources at national level in order to take into account any national specificities and to fill any information gaps that cannot be covered by data from available European surveys.

The indicators included in the NAP and covered by the monitoring framework are structured at three levels:

- 1) "target monitoring indicators", which are also included in Chapter 7 of the NAP;
- 2) "additional monitoring indicators," and
- 3) “program monitoring indicators”.

The Annexes XIX & XX set out in detail the indicators against which the implementation of the NAP Recommendation will be monitored.

Deputy Minister of Labour & Social
Affairs

Dr. Domna-Maria Michailidou

ANNEXES



i article 53 of law
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ii Joint Ministerial
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iii Ministerial Decision
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Focus group data
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