Children in alternative care:
Comparable statistics to monitor progress on deinstitutionalisation across the European Union

POLICY BRIEF ON FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DATACARE PROJECT

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Introduction

There is a firm commitment by the European Union and its Member States to the deinstitutionalisation of children in alternative care and support for their transition to care that is family and community-based. Children growing up in alternative care have very often experienced significant trauma before being placed in care. Residential care, in particular, is known to expose them to additional risks if it is not equipped to provide them with the individualised care they need for their healthy development and social inclusion. Children need stable and safe relationships with caring adults to thrive, and such relationships are far more likely to be created in a family environment.

For that reason, the proportion of children placed in residential care compared to those placed in formal family-based care provides a useful indicator for the monitoring of progress towards a shared goal: to ensure that children in alternative care receive high quality, inclusive, family and community-based care. Such an indicator would shed light on the effectiveness of the deinstitutionalisation reforms that are taking place in many European countries. In combination with other indicators, including the reasons for placement and the later outcomes for children, it would speak directly to the common EU child rights agenda.

There has been no comparable and Europe-wide indicator to gauge the share of children growing up within different forms of alternative care.

To date, however, there has been no comparable and Europe-wide indicator to gauge the share of children growing up within different forms of alternative care. There is, at present, no obligation for EU Member States to collect and report data to the EU on agreed indicators to measure the state of play of deinstitutionalisation and the transition to family and community-based care. The EU Social Scoreboard, for example, does not include any indicator to measure progress in these areas.

The DataCare project, a joint initiative of Eurochild and UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO), demonstrates that the surveyed countries in Europe already collect data for children in alternative care. Data being published at national level can be used to establish comparable indicators on residential care and three other relevant and interlinked indicators:[1]

1 The rate[2] of children aged 0-17 in alternative care at a specific point in time (per 100,000)

2 The rate of children aged 0-17 in residential care at a specific point in time (per 100,000)

3 The rate of children aged 0-17 in formal family-based care at a specific point in time (per 100,000)

4 The percentage of children aged 0-17 in residential care (of the total number of children aged 0-17 in alternative care at a specific point in time)

The DataCare project, launched in March 2020, has mapped alternative care data systems across the 27 Member States of the European Union (EU-27) and the United Kingdom (UK) to inform a shift towards a more transparent, common approach to data collection and reporting across Europe. Its findings and conclusions are drawn from the analysis of responses from National Correspondents in 23 countries based on the DataCare National Template,[3] together with data and information gathered by the research team for the remaining five countries.[4]

This policy brief summarises the policy context, as well as the key findings and recommendations from the analysis of the national responses to the DataCare survey across Europe. More detailed information can be found in the full research report: Better Data for Better Child Protection Systems in Europe: Mapping how data on children in alternative care are collected, analysed, and published across 28 European countries, which includes a full set of country profiles.

The policy context

BOX 1.

The international policy framework on children in alternative care

In 2009, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) endorsed the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (UN Guidelines). These Guidelines direct States to ensure that children grow up in their families where possible; that alternative forms of care provide a supportive, protective care environment; and that children living in residential care who have a family network receive support to reintegrate into those families in safety.

In December 2019, the UNGA adopted the Resolution on the Rights of the Child. This reaffirmed the UN Guidelines and highlighted key issues related to children in alternative care in more detail. It also highlighted the need for continued efforts and reforms to avoid the unnecessary separation of children from their families and to protect children without parental care, including those in alternative care, against abuse and exploitation.[5]

Four new EU policy initiatives in 2021 have renewed momentum for the delivery of commitments to deinstitutionalisation in the coming years: the EU Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights,[6] the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, the European Child Guarantee[7] and the European Strategy for the Rights of People with Disabilities.[8] These policy frameworks acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable members of society and emphasise the need to address disparities and inequalities as the only route to resilient and sustainable economic recovery. The EU's unprecedented economic stimulus package, therefore, prioritises investments that are socially inclusive and that support the well-being of children both today and in the future.

These policy initiatives also foresee the development of frameworks to monitor and evaluate implementation at both EU and national level.[9] This opens an important window of opportunity to monitor progress on the deinstitutionalisation of children in alternative care across the EU, informed by the findings of the DataCare project. This monitoring demands the use of comparable statistics on children in alternative care and the integration of relevant indicators into EU and national-level statistical frameworks and systems.

The DataCare project also aims to inform ongoing global efforts to establish a core set of statistical indicators on children in alternative care, including within the EU, which plays a key role in enabling the reform of data systems on alternative care[10] at the national level. The EU has invested millions of Euros to support deinstitutionalisation and the reform of child protection systems in Member States over several decades. EU funding, for example through the European Social Fund (from 2021, the European Social Fund Plus) and the European Regional Development Fund, has accelerated both reforms and national investments (see Box 2 for examples from Poland and Slovakia).

BOX 2.

European Union support for the reform of data systems in two Member States

In Poland, the National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Children and Adoptions (NARPDCA) is implementing a project financed by the European Regional Development Fund (Competitiveness Operational Programme 2014-2020). The project aims to design a (digital) system, available at the national level, that will give citizens and institutions responsible for child protection and adoption access to electronic services, information, and enable them to exchange data.

In Slovakia, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family has partnered with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support and UNICEF in a technical support project. This is funded through the EU Structural Reform Support Programme. The project aims to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the alternative care system. The goal is to assist the country's development of a national monitoring and evaluation framework and the capacity for its implementation and sustainability over time. This is a contribution to the achievement of the country's strategic goals for both alternative care and deinstitutionalisation.

Sources: Polish National Response 2021 & Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of Slovakia: https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/buxus/docs/SSVaR/OVOZ/Koncepcia_17.12.2020_pdf (accessed July 2021).

The benefits of comparable data

Quality data on children in alternative care also illuminate the ways in which countries support children in need of care, including how social welfare, education and health services prevent unnecessary family separation and provide equal opportunities for all children.

Comparable data will allow the EU and Member States to improve their knowledge of good practices across Europe. Such data provide insights into conditions that enable effective policy implementation, the factors that hamper progress, and the support and investments required to accelerate change. Better data lead to more informed policy and programme decision-making, which can, in turn, contribute to better outcomes for children in alternative care.

Quality data on children in alternative care also illuminate the ways in which countries support children in need of care, including how social welfare, education and health services prevent unnecessary family separation and provide equal opportunities for all children. Moreover, many countries are reforming their child protection systems, which should go hand-in-hand with improvements to data collection and processing.

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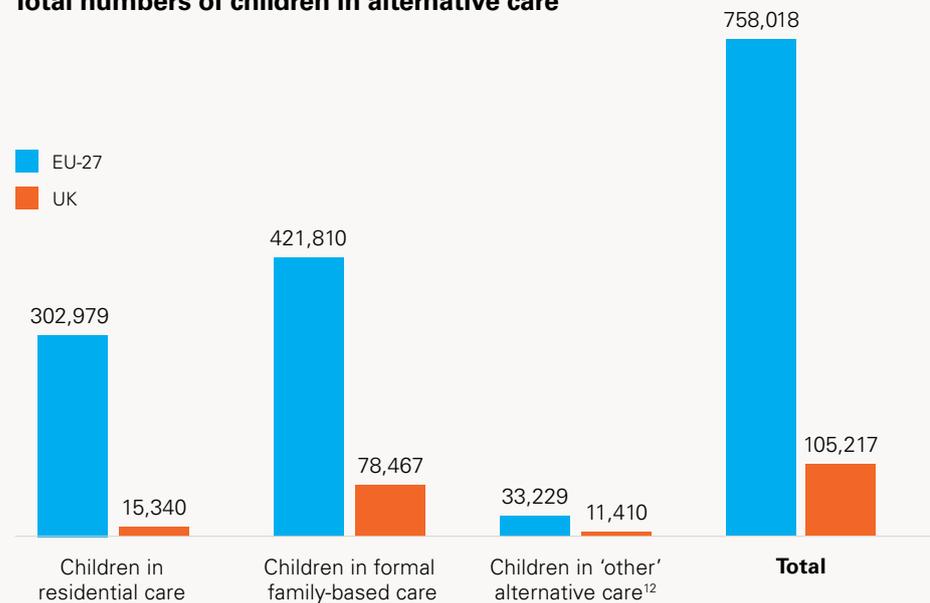# Key findings from European Union Member States and the United Kingdom

Sufficient data are published at national level to establish comparable indicators at EU level

Data are collected in all surveyed countries that allow for the calculation of the four indicators proposed in the recommendations. While we acknowledge that these indicators do not provide a complete picture of the efficacy of alternative care systems, they do create an important entry point for policy debate and for the monitoring of policy implementation and resource allocation.

The DataCare project has calculated a total number of 302,979 children in residential care in the EU countries based on the data reported, as shown in Table 1.[11] However, here too there are significant gaps, overlaps and other limitations – from varied definitions of alternative care to different data points – that hamper comparability. As a result, the totals should be seen as indications rather than as actual total numbers.

FIGURE 1.

Total numbers of children in alternative care

Source: DataCare project, 2021.

For the calculation of these four indicators for each country surveyed, see the DataCare Country Overviews and/or the technical report Better Data for Better Child Protection Systems in Europe: Mapping how data on children in alternative care are collected, analysed, and published across 28 European countries.[13]

Strong legislation is crucial to support and guide data systems on alternative care

The findings reveal that all surveyed countries, with the exception of Malta and Slovenia, have some legislation on data systems on alternative care. Six EU countries – Denmark, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden – have legislation that strongly supports the collection of data on children in alternative care and that provides detailed requirements for the data that need to be gathered.

There is a clear need for shared understanding on definitions of alternative care

The findings show that the term 'alternative care', or a close equivalent, is not widely used at the national level in the 28 countries. Most National Correspondents reported the use of country-specific terms for residential and foster care in policy discussions and legislation. At the higher aggregate level, however, the broad comparability of definitions could be observed across countries, as seen in Annex 1. This is not the case, however, at the lower aggregate level, where comparability is hampered by the wide diversity of care provisions, the lack of definitions that distinguish different types of residential care, and confusion about the meaning of terms like 'foster care'.

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All countries collect data on children in alternative care, but not enough data are published

The DataCare project revealed that far more data tend to be gathered than are published in most countries.

The findings show that, with the exception of Slovenia since 2014, all countries surveyed publish some data on children in alternative care. A comparison of the questionnaires and instructions used to collect administrative data on children in alternative care with the published data revealed that far more data tend to be gathered than are published in most countries. The publication of these data would enable a better understanding of the situation of these children among all stakeholders.

EU support could help to close key gaps in the published data from surveyed countries

The research team has identified the following questions that cannot yet be answered in full, given the limitations in the current coverage of some countries' data collection systems. Yet answers to these questions are crucial for informed and effective policies for children in alternative care.

- Is the care provided 'genuinely necessary and suitable'?
- How effective are prevention, family support and gatekeeping systems and services in preventing unnecessary family separation?
- How many children leaving the alternative care system are reintegrated with their families (if in the best interests of the child) and receive timely and effective support at any and every phase of their childcare pathway?
- How many young people are supported to transition to adulthood and provided with aftercare?
- Is institutional/residential care being progressively replaced by other forms of residential and family-based care?
- Are there clear definitions that distinguish the different forms of residential care – and particularly between small group homes and institutional facilities?
- What is the quality of care and what are the outcomes for children and adolescents in terms of their development, health, education and well-being?

Cooperation and exchange play a vital role in effective use of data and improving data systems

The DataCare findings show that cooperation and communication between different organisations and line ministries can maximise the impact of the data gathered. Such cooperation helps to reduce the risks of producing fragmented and incomplete data, and prevents the duplication of work caused by overlapping data collection.

Many countries are reforming their child protection data systems

The mapping exercise found that 19 countries are currently reforming, or have recently reformed, their data system on alternative care. This shows an awareness of the need for better data across Europe. There also appears to be an increasing understanding of the importance of strengthening existing data systems on alternative care to produce good quality data.

There are promising practices on the aggregation of data from sub-national to national level

The 28 countries surveyed include countries with both decentralised and more centralised systems of governance. They include federalised states like Spain, which has very divergent systems of care across its autonomous regions, yet manages to publish aggregate data at the national level on a regular basis. Such examples can help inform the reform efforts of European countries with similar governance structures and may even provide insights into how comparability could be achieved at EU-level.

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Policy recommendations

Two sets of recommendations have emerged from the DataCare project. The first set of recommendations is directed at the European Commission and the Social Protection Committee (SPC), including the Committee's Indicator sub-group (ISG), as well as other stakeholders at EU-level. The second set of recommendations is directed at decision-makers at the national level.

1. EU level

1   **The European Commission and the SPC/ISG are developing a common monitoring framework to measure progress in the implementation of the European Child Guarantee.** This provides an opportunity to adopt indicators that measure Member States' progress towards deinstitutionalisation and the transition to family and community-based care. They can integrate these indicators into the existing set of EU indicators on social protection and social inclusion.

There are four relevant and interlinked indicators for which countries across Europe already collect data that are largely comparable, as the DataCare project shows. These indicators can form the basis for the process of indicator development and definition led by the ISG. The indicators are as follows:

- The rate[14] of children aged 0-17 in alternative care at a specific point in time (per 100,000)
- The rate of children aged 0-17 in residential care at a specific point in time (per 100,000)
- The rate of children aged 0-17 in formal family-based care at a specific point in time (per 100,000)
- The percentage of children aged 0-17 in residential care (of the total number of children aged 0-17 in alternative care at a specific point in time)

As these indicators are adopted, work with EU Member States needs to continue to improve data comparability and quality with a view to arrive at a common definition and harmonise other metadata across the EU. The process can build on the work and findings of the DataCare project as well as other developments at EU and global level.
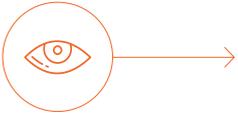
2   The European Commission – through its European Statistical System[15] – can provide EU Member States with the guidance and support needed to assess the maturity of their data systems on alternative care.[16] This will help Member States examine their ability to collect, analyse and report comparable data of good quality on children in alternative care, and to plan and budget actions to strengthen those components of the data systems that need improvement. The European Commission can further provide national authorities with the space for mutual learning and exchange in this area. This can include exchange on good practices and exchange with other sectors with more established data systems, like health and education. These spaces can be created, for instance, through the European Social Policy Network, the SPC, and/or the framework of a Peer Review on Social Inclusion of Children in Alternative Care.

2. National level

There is a high level of interest across the EU Member States and the UK in data on children in alternative care, as well as the efforts to strengthen their data systems on this group of children. The fact that all countries surveyed by the DataCare project already gather some administrative data on alternative care provides a foundation on which to build. Investing in improving the data systems on children in alternative care is an important step in enabling informed and effective decision making. It can also lead to greater transparency and, therefore, to increased public confidence and support. The analysis of the data systems across the 28 countries has indicated a great variety of systems with all countries showing a combination of strengths and areas for improvement. Therefore, not all the recommendations that follow will be relevant to all countries. Stakeholders in each national context can determine the recommendations that are appropriate in their setting.

1   **Governments can assess the maturity of their data systems on children in alternative care, identify the components that need strengthening, and include system-strengthening actions in relevant national action plans that are costed and funded.**[17] Within the EU context, Governments can include actions to strengthen their data systems on children in alternative care in the national action plans that they are developing for the implementation of the European Child Guarantee. Governments can include the indicators listed above in the monitoring and evaluation frameworks for their national action plans to ensure a common approach across EU countries to tracking progress on social protection and social inclusion of children in alternative care.

2 Governments can pay particular attention to the following points during their assessment and planning processes to strengthen their national data systems on children in alternative care, which reflect the main findings of the DataCare project:

- A sound legislative basis for collection, analysis and publication of data on children in alternative care.
- A central agency with a clear mandate to:
  - develop and define country-specific and internationally comparable indicators (see the four indicators listed above) to measure progress in deinstitutionalisation and transition to family and community-based care.
  - collect and manage data from across all regions and all relevant sectors to produce the agreed set of statistics on children in alternative care and assure data quality.
- All children in residential and in formal family-based care are counted and included in the statistics. This may require a mapping or census of children in residential care and a count of children in family-based care, for instance, through the population census or other methods.
- The individual child is the unit of statistical data collection to enable longitudinal tracking and to make issues like children included in multiple provisions at once and readmission visible in the data.
- Data on children in residential care are disaggregated by children in small group homes, in institutional facilities, and in other types of residential care, with clear definitions that distinguish each type from the others.
- Data on children in alternative care are systematically disaggregated with a view to "leave no one behind" and enable Governments to analyse, for example, trends across different population groups and residential inequalities.[18] Disaggregation variables to consider include: sex/gender, age, geographical location, and where possible disability (disaggregated by type of disability) and citizenship.
- Statistics produced on children in alternative care, including the data used to produce the statistics, are made accessible to researchers and other key stakeholders for secondary analysis and research. They are also used for monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making in line with national laws and the European Statistics Code of Practice.[19]

This policy brief has offered a starting point for discussions and agreement across the EU and its Member States on the steps needed to close key gaps in the data and indicators on children in alternative care. If fully implemented, the recommendations emerging from the DataCare project will help to increase the visibility of, and response to, one of Europe's most excluded groups of children.

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Annex 1
International glossary of
alternative care categories

Nation	Alternative care	Formal family-based care	Foster care	Formal kinship care	Residential care
Definitions	Authorised care away from the child's parents, incl. all residential care	Authorised care away from the child's parents, in a family	Authorised care with person/ family unknown to the child	Authorised care with family members/ friends	Collective non-family setting with children cared for by paid adults
Austria	Volle Erziehung		Pflege familie		Sozialpädagogische Einrichtungen
Belgium: Flanders	Uithuisplaatsing in het kader van Jeugdhulp	Pleegzorg	Bestandspleegzorg	Netwerkpleegzorg	Residentiële opvang/ zorg
Belgium: German-speaking Community	Stationäre Unterbringung	Pflegefamilien	Pflegschaft	Verwandtschaftspflege	Einrichtung
Belgium: Wallonia-Brussels	Du placement d'enfants; Mesure d'éloignement du milieu de vie	Accueil familial	Accueil familial	Accueillant familial-famille ou familier (famille élargie)	De prise en charge résidentielle ou hébergement
Bulgaria	Настаняване извън семейството		приемна грижа	Настаняване при близки и роднини	Резидентна грижа
Croatia	Domovi socijalne skrbi za djecu		Udomiteljstvo	Srodničko udomiteljstvo	Institucionalne socijalne usluge (or domovi za zbrinjavanje djece)
Cyprus			Ανάδοχες Οικογένειες		ίδρυμα παιδικής / εφηβικής προστασίας
Czechia		Náhradní rodinná péče	Pěstounské péče	Příbuzenecká pěstounksá péče	Ústavní výchova
Denmark	Anbringelse af børn og unge uden for hjemmet	Familiepleje	Almene plejefamilie	Netvaerksplejefamilier	Døgninstitution; socialpædagogisk opholdssted
Estonia	Asendushooldus		Hoolduspere	Eestkoste	Asenduskodu
Finland	Sijaishuolto		Perhehoito		Laitoshoito
France			Famille d'accueil	Placement a un autre membre de la famille ou à un tiers digne de confiance	Maisons d'enfants à caractère social; Hébergement éclaté; foyer de l'enfance
Germany	Stationäre Hilfe zur Erziehung				
Vollzeitpflege	Vollzeitpflege			Heimerziehung	
Greece	Εναλλακτική φροντίδα	Οικογενειακού τύπου φροντίδα	Αναδοχή	Συγγενική Αναδοχή	ίδρυμα παιδικής προστασίας
Hungary	Szakellátás		Nevelőszülő	Családba fogadás	Gyermekotthon
Ireland	Children in care		Foster care general	Foster care with relatives	Children's residential centres

Nation	Alternative care	Formal family-based care	Foster care	Formal kinship care	Residential care
Italy	Protezione e tutela minori (allontanamento dei bambini)	Affidamento familiare	Affidamento eterofamiliare	Affidamento intrafamiliare	Accoglienza in comunità residenziale
Latvia	Ārpusģimenes aprūpē esošie bērni		Audžuģimenēm		Aprūpes institūcijās ievietoto bērnu
Lithuania		Laikina arba nuolatinė globa šeimoje			Šeimynos ir bendruomeniniai vaikų globos namai
Luxembourg	Les aides en dehors du cadre familial		Famille d'accueil / placements en familles		Institutions de protection de remplacement / Les Maisons d'enfants de l'État
Malta	Alternative care		Fostering		Community homes
Netherlands	Jeugdhulp met verblijf		Pleegzorg	Netwerk-pleegzorg	Residentiële jeugdhulp
Poland	Opieka zastępcza	Rodzinna piecza zastępcza	Rodzinna piecza zastępcza	Rodzina zastępcza spokrewniona	Instytucjonalna piecza zastępcza
Portugal	Cuidado alternativo	Acolhimento Familiar	Acolhimento Familiar		Acolhimento Residencial Generalista
Romania	Protecția specială a copilului	Servicii de tip familial	Plasament la o familie au persoană	Plasament familial la rude pana la gradul IV	Instituțiilor rezidențiale
Slovakia	Náhradná osobná starostlivosť		Pestúnska starostlivosť		X*
Slovenia	Nadomestno varstvo; Ukrepi za varstvo koristi otroka		Rejništvo		Centri za usposabljanje, delo in varstvo; vzgojni zavodi; Stanovanjske skupine
Spain	Medidas de protección con separación familiar	Acogimiento familiar	Acogimiento en familia ajena	Acogimiento en familia extensa	Acogimiento residencial
Sweden	Placering utanför det egna hemmet	Familjehem	Familjehem	Nätverkshem	Institutionsvård
UK: England	Looked after children		Placement with approved foster carers not family or friends	Placement foster carers who are a relative or a family friend	Children's homes
UK: Northern Ireland	Children in care		Non-kinship foster care	Kinship foster care	Residential children's homes
UK: Scotland	Looked after away from home		Looked after with foster carers	Looked after away from home with friends/relatives	Looked after in residential accommodation
UK: Wales	Looked after children		Foster care	Foster care with relative or friend	Residential homes

* An English term or definition was provided that fits with the international definition, but no term was given in the national language.

Endnotes

1   An overview of data for these four indicators is presented in the Eurochild and UNICEF 2021 report: *Better Data for Better Child Protection Systems in Europe: Mapping how data on children in alternative care is collected, analysed, and published across 28 European countries*. It demonstrates that progress in deinstitutionalisation is uneven across the EU. This underlines the need for common indicators and reliable and comparable statistics on children in alternative care at EU and national level.

2   Calculating the data as a rate allows for a more accurate picture of trends in terms of the general population aged 0-17 and enables comparison both within the country, regionally and internationally.

3   Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK.

4   Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovakia.

5   UNGA, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019. 74/133. Rights of the child, United Nations General Assembly, New York, 2020.

6   European Commission, 'The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan', Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Brussels, 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en) accessed July 2021.

7   Information on The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee is available here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-strategy-rights-child-and-european-child-guarantee_en. You can also read the full Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 to establish a European Child Guarantee via this link: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021H1004 (accessed July 2021).

8   Union of equality: Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 | European Commission (accessed July 2021).

9   Council of the European Union, 'Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee', ST/9106/2021/INIT OJ L 223, 22.6.2021, p. 14–23, Brussels, 2021 (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2021.223.01.0014.01.ENG).

10 Including the work of the Global Collaborative Platform on Transforming Children's Care led by the Better Care Network. A Working Group of the Platform is examining evidence, measurement and indicators on children in alternative care. More information is available at: https://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn-in-action/key-initiatives/global-collaborative-platform-on-transforming-children%E2%80%99s-care (accessed July 2021).

11 Although stock data are for a specific point in time, different countries use a different indicator date. This is often 31 December, but 31 March, 1 May, 31 July, and 1 November were also seen. In addition, not all data provided were for the same year. For most countries, the data were from 2018, 2019 or 2020, and for three countries the data were from 2017. This means that the data are not for one point in time for all countries. Some of the data that were classed as 'other' because of lack of clarity on whether or not the provision should be classed as alternative care, or whether it was residential or family-based care, may include residential care and are not included in the total for residential care here. For Austria, no stock data were available, so the total number of children that were in alternative care/residential care at any point in 2019 was used. For Slovenia, the data on children with disabilities are from 2014, and the rest of the data are from 2017. The data for 13 countries include care provisions that are not considered alternative care in all countries. Several National Correspondents have expressed doubts or certainty about whether all children in alternative care are covered by the data. There are also other issues with comparability, as has been laid out in the DataCare final findings report, *Better Data for Better Child Protection Systems in Europe*, so the calculation does not give us the exact numbers of children in alternative care and in residential care.

12 Categories that are not considered alternative care in all countries or categories that cannot be clearly distinguished as residential or family-based.

13 With the exception of Austria, as no stock data were available for that country. Eurochild and UNICEF, *Better Data for Better Child Protection Systems in Europe: Mapping how data on children in alternative care is collected, analysed, and published across 28 European countries and Country Overviews*, UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO), Geneva, 2021: https://www.eurochild.org/resource/better-data-for-better-child-protection-systems-in-europe/.

14 As noted, calculating the data as a rate allows for a more accurate picture of trends in terms of the general population aged 0-17 and enables comparison both within the country, regionally and internationally.

15 The ESS is the partnership between Eurostat and the national statistical institutes and other national authorities responsible in each EU Member State for the development, production, and dissemination of European statistics. For more information, visit https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess (accessed July 2021).

16 See, for example, the UNICEF tool to assess the maturity of an administrative data system on justice for children (https://data.unicef.org/resources/gauging-the-maturity-of-an-administrative-data-system-on-justice-for-children/) accessed September 2021.

17 Such actions can vary. One country, for example, may strengthen its legislative basis for the collection and reporting of data on children in alternative care. Another country, however, may see the need to start disaggregating the existing indicators by variables that enhance the identification of the groups of children who are more likely to be placed in alternative care than other children.

18 For more on data disaggregation, see, for example, the practical guidebook on data disaggregation for the SDGs and the compilation of tools and resources for data disaggregation (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/52nd-session/documents/BG-3a-Practical_guidebook_on_data_disaggregation_for_the_SDGs-E.pdf) and (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/52nd-session/documents/BG-3a-Compilation_of_tools_and_resources_for_data_disaggregation-E.pdf) accessed September 2021.

19 Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/european-quality-standards/european-statistics-code-of-practice (accessed September 2021).

UNICEF works in the world's toughest places to reach the most disadvantaged children and adolescents — and to protect the rights of every child, everywhere. Across 190 countries and territories, we do whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive and fulfill their potential, from early childhood through adolescence. And we never give up.

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Eurochild advocates for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking We are a network of organisations working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work.

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