

# Country Report Germany

## Eurochild Child Guarantee Taskforce

Recommendations for the Child  
Guarantee National Action Plan  
in Germany



**Eurochild**  
Putting children at  
the heart of Europe



There are 13,677,902 children in Germany. Children make up 16.4% of the total population. 25.1% of children in Germany are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

## Governance

### National actors and their functions

At the time of publishing this report, it was not possible to name the National Coordinator for the European Child Guarantee in Germany. The European Commission publishes a [list of National Coordinators](#) as provided by the national governments. It is not necessarily up-to-date. The Department for International Family Policy has done some preliminary work on the issue, but there is no draft of the National Action Plan available at this time.

### Best practices of reaching out to stakeholders and relevant parties

As part of a pilot project in cooperation with the European Commission, UNICEF published a [“policy deep dive” country report](#) which lays the foundation of the German National Action Plan.

This report analyses existing policies and legislation to identify gaps and barriers to children to access the key services of the Child Guarantee.

It is encouraging that the new government has set its sights on working towards equal opportunities for all children and young people and fighting child poverty, also in the framework of a more social Europe. The new governing coalition made up of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) announced in their coalition agreement that, among other things, it aims to lift more children out of poverty, to provide better chances for children and young people by means of a Kindergrundsicherung (Child Basic Income) and to concentrate on those who need the most support.

The Department for International Family Politics has attended recent events organised by civil society on the Child Guarantee. However, at this time, there has been no official information from the government. Since the new government was only sworn in on 8 December 2021, and the lack of information can put down to the government transition period, it has yet to be seen if and how it will keep its promises.

## Main Recommendations by Taskforce Germany

For the National Action Plan to successfully contribute to the proclaimed aims of the new government and to fulfil its child rights obligations, the following key issues should be taken into account:

- The German National Action Plan should focus on children and families who are at an increased risk of the effects of living in poverty. Focusing on addressing precarious life situations is a more appropriate way to help children and families experiencing poverty and allows us to better grasp the intersectional disadvantages;
- Both the drafting and the implementation of the German National Action Plan should be guided by the real participation of children and young people. This includes focus group discussions to obtain targeted perspectives from children and young people in need, which are often not (adequately) represented in current data and surveys, as well as a broader, constant form of participation covering the entire timeframe until 2030;
- The National Coordinator must therefore work closely with the relevant actors on the Länder (Federal State) level. Furthermore, the National Coordinator particularly needs to involve communal administrative actors to ensure that the measures reach families on the ground;
- The National Action Plan must be viewed as one part of a comprehensive strategy to fight child poverty, which combines infrastructure and financial measures;
- Sustainable solutions must be sought when it comes to creating and/or maintaining high-quality social services; the shortage of skilled workers in the social sector is a major problem;
- It is crucial to develop the National Action Plan with an inter-agency approach and ensure that all relevant actors are on board from the start i.e. children, families, civil society organisations, political decision-makers, administrative actors;
- The National Coordinator should be able to work independently and should have the necessary resources and competencies to involve all relevant agencies. We recommend to place the Co-ordination Office in the Federal Chancellery in order to ensure this.

## Children in Need and Outreach Measures

### Towards a consensus on who children in need are and why

Focusing on life situations with an increased risk of poverty, the European Child Guarantee recommends Member States to identify children in need while considering the specific disadvantages experienced by different groups of children. This includes, among others, homeless children, children with disabilities, children with mental health issues, children in alternative care - of which there are almost 150,000 in Germany, children with a migrant background and children in precarious family situations.

We want to emphasise that the Child Guarantee must live up to its name and its aspirations by working towards guaranteeing equal access to important services for all children. The German National Action Plan should focus on real life situations where children

and families are at an increased risk of the effects of living in poverty. Focusing on addressing precarious life situations is a more appropriate way to meet the individual needs and lived experiences of children and families experiencing poverty and allows us to better grasp the intersectional disadvantages.

### Stepping up efforts – reaching more children in need

#### *Enabling real participation of children and young people*

We are convinced that only through the real participation of children and young people can we gain a comprehensive assessment of factors in their life situation that lead to an increased risk of poverty. Through genuine participation, we can also better understand how preventive approaches can mitigate the consequences of poverty. Existing structures, like schools, childcare facilities and youth work



institutions, should be used to facilitate participation. Insights from earlier child participation processes should also be considered.

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### ***Including civil society and the communal administration***

Given Germany’s complex federal political system, not only is inter-agency coordination required to achieve the Child Guarantee, but also cooperation among all political levels must be ensured. Most of the areas covered by the Child Guarantee – first and foremost education and health – are governed at a Länder level. However, the Federal State can and must shape the legal and financial framework. The National Coordinator must therefore work closely with the relevant actors on the Länder level. Furthermore, the National Coordinator particularly needs to involve communal administrative actors to ensure that the measures reach families on the ground. A feasibility study in cooperation with the communes can help to identify and reduce challenges when working beyond the different political levels.

As a vital stakeholder, civil society must effectively be included both in the planning and the implementation of the Child Guarantee Action Plan. Here, too, existing structures and platforms should be used, e.g., the Nationale Armutskonferenz (German Anti-Poverty Conference, member of the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN)) and the Ratschlag Kinderarmut (network of 69 German organisations committed to fighting child poverty).



# Key Services and Policy Reform for Children in Need

## Current national policies and strategies, and gaps and omissions

### ***Combining infrastructure and financial instruments***

The National Action Plan must be viewed and conceptualised as one part of a comprehensive strategy to fight child poverty which combines infrastructure and financial measures. The introduction of a Kindergrundsicherung (Child Basic Income) and the new calculation of the subsistence level are important components of such a comprehensive strategy regarding the material support of children and their families. In addition, the digital Kinderchancenportal für Bildungs- und

Teilhabeleistungen (digital platform for children's equal chances), the legal right to full-day care in primary school education which gradually comes into force from 2026, the needs-based expansion of mental health services, more school social work and other relevant measures planned by the government need to be factored in. Furthermore, all measures by the government should be assessed in terms of their affect on the situation of children and young people at risk of poverty.

### ***Enhancing social infrastructure and training professionals***

The comprehensive strategy must also include measures to expand and improve the social infrastructure required for the Child Guarantee. Only where health services, schools, leisure facilities and sports clubs are available can access to services be guaranteed as foreseen in the Child Guarantee. Here in particular, the urban-rural divide must be considered. When it comes to creating and/or maintaining high-quality social services, the shortage of skilled workers in the social sector is a major problem, which requires sustainable solutions. Studies predict that Germany will experience a lack of 230,000 professionals in early childhood education and care in the coming years. But the general shortage also applies to school teachers and professionals in the Child and Youth Welfare Services. The quality of the services included in the Child Guarantee depends highly on the professionals' qualifications. In rural areas especially, there is often a lack of teachers, childcare workers, social workers, and other professionals. The impacts of the COVID pandemic must be critically considered in this regard.



# Building an Enabling Policy Framework to create a ‘whole of government approach’

**Current national policies and strategies on children and young people, and suggested steps to improve the national response to child poverty**

## ***Establishing inter-agency coordination***

The comprehensive fight against child poverty is a challenge that requires joint action of all relevant actors: political and administrative stakeholders, civil society, professionals, as well as each and every individual. It is all the more important to develop the National Action Plan with an inter-agency approach from the start and to make sure early on to have all relevant actors on board.

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**We welcome that the German federal government and the other Member States of the European Union have decided to adopt and implement the European Child Guarantee. Child poverty is a far-reaching problem in Germany too: Every fifth child in Germany lives in poverty. Despite the country’s good economic development, child poverty has stagnated at this high level for almost two decades.**

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At a national level Germany so far lacks an integrated approach to preventing child poverty. However, several municipalities, often supported by the Länder, have successfully linked different policy areas as well as support services to children and families in so-called “local prevention chains”. One example is the project “Leave No Child Behind!”, a joint initiative by the State Government of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Bertelsmann Foundation.

It is of central importance to acknowledge the multidimensionality of the causes and consequences of child poverty. In practice, this means that not only the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth must be involved, but also the Federal Ministry of Health, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the new Federal Ministry of Housing, Urban Development and Building. The National Coordinator should therefore be able to work independently instead of being attached to a single ministry and should have the necessary resources and competencies to involve all relevant agencies.



# Accountability - Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

## Existing checks and balances

For the National Action Plan to have a real impact on the living conditions of poor children and families, concrete targets and indicators need to be defined. This is a prerequisite for the further development of the policy. Existing monitoring and reporting systems, like the State Report Cycles for the UN Convention on the rights of the child and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), can be a fruitful basis.

## Suggested steps towards a more robust monitoring and evaluation framework

Civil society should play a part in the process of defining and assessing indicators and targets. There continues to be a lack in many areas of the data needed to assess the implementation of measures to fight and prevent poverty. Vulnerable groups of children and young people are often not adequately represented in the existing data. Eurochild's DataCare findings released in Dec 2021 provides an example for greater representation of children in alternative care. A further example, is the lack of data on the impact on children and young people of measures taken to manage the COVID pandemic in Germany. Vulnerable groups of children were hit especially hard by the various lockdown restrictions, and to adequately meet their needs in the catch-up measures taken by government it is crucial to include specific sets of research criteria when collecting data. Another important instrument in the assessment of the action plan's success should be the participation of children and young people. Here, again, a variety of surveys and consultations is already available, for example the World Vision Children Study, the Child Rights Index by the German Children's Fund (summary in English) or the consultations in the framework of the State Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. As the target group of the measures, the views of children and young people should play a central role in the evaluation of the measures and should guide their further development.

## Further Information from the Eurochild Child Guarantee Taskforce in Germany

The German Children's Fund, as the Eurochild Taskforce lead in Germany, in cooperation with Kindermittel e.V., has invited civil society actors working on child poverty and children's rights to jointly publish a key issues paper on the Child Guarantee in Germany. In this paper we provide recommendations for implementation from a child rights perspective and we use the paper as a basis to participate in the (public) debate. You can find the key issue paper (in German) and the participating organisations under the following link [here](#).

This Eurochild Child Guarantee Taskforce Country Report is a preliminary summary of the issues discussed in the key issues paper.

