

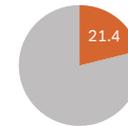
## “ Country recommendation

France should take into account the consequences of the global pandemic on youth and children. Some children were endangered and isolated during quarantine, including those exposed to a rise in domestic violence, mental health issues, and social inequalities.

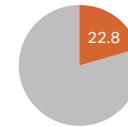
## Country Profile 2022



# France



**Child Population:**  
**14.47 million**  
(21.4% of total population)



**Child Poverty Rate:**  
**22.8% (2021) ▼\***

\* [lower compared to pre-covid rates in 2019](#)

## RESPONDENT ORGANISATION(S):

[Convention Nationale des Associations de Protection de l'Enfant](#)

## European Semester Country Report and Recommendations

### Overview of the country report: identification of the children in need

This year's *European Semester Country Report for France* does not focus on the situation of children or investment in children. According to Eurochild member, the Convention Nationale des Associations de Protection de l'Enfant (CNAPE), the **report focuses only on education in general**, and how it meets (or does not meet) labour market expectations.

The areas covered were not representative of the reality on the ground. For example, it failed to include early child development, children in alternative care and deinstitutionalisation, children's right to be heard, children with a migration background,

including child refugees, children impacted by the pandemic and the inequalities exacerbated, children's mental health and wellbeing, children's rights in the digital environment, and the involvement of civil society.

### Needs analysis: alignment at country-level

The recommendations included in the country report do not sufficiently address the needs on the ground. For example, in the *Country Specific Recommendations for France*, the European Commission made several social recommendations. However, there are **no clear recommendations for investing in children's health or protection**.

However, the report states that 'labour shortages' are rising in France. This is of great concern for social workers, as the numbers of professionals are declining every year, which has a direct impact

on France's child protection system. It has now become a real crisis and has led to multiple demonstrations and gatherings.

### Poverty and Social Exclusion – experiences of children, families, and communities

#### Child poverty in France

France has a total child population of approximately 14.47 million, 22.8% of which lived at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2021. This amounts to approximately 3.3 million children.

Most children who benefit from child welfare in France are in great need. During France's recent presidential elections, **CNAPE advocated for greater attention for the recruitment of child welfare professionals and mental health services**, such as social workers and child psychiatrists.<sup>1</sup> Additionally,

CNAPE finds that children in French overseas departments<sup>2</sup> and unaccompanied minors are of particular concern, as they are often not included in policies.

#### Child protection in French overseas departments

(Mayotte, Guyane, La Réunion, La Martinique, and Guadeloupe) is rarely mentioned and prioritised in public policies. At national level, the representatives of these territories do not have adequate opportunity to express the experiences, difficulties, and specific needs of their children and young people. Despite almost all national policies being applicable to overseas regions, some provisions and directives remain impossible to apply for economic, social, or even cultural reasons.

The French overseas departments are marked by great precariousness and high unemployment rates and the

<sup>1</sup> CNAPE, *En 2022, je vote pour*, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Departments are the administrative divisions of France, with 101 in total including 5 overseas.

lack of infrastructure makes it impossible for many to access public services and healthcare. Additionally, the pandemic has significantly impacted children and aggravated the difficulties of families, particularly the most vulnerable. Many families live in unsanitary and overcrowded housing and have difficulty accessing adequate nutrition and the inadequacy of the care system does not guarantee effective monitoring of children's health and adequate responses.

This lack of care, and the violence experienced by children, is impacting on children's mental health as well. These difficulties are reinforced by dropping out of school, the lack of prospects for the future, the consumption of narcotics, and the inadequacy of health services, including mental health support.

Significant resources must be invested on building schools and healthcare facilities, creating child protection systems, such as maternal and child protection, and preventing violence and addiction.

CNAPE calls on the French government to invest in these three priority areas to eradicate poverty and social exclusion of children and young people in France's overseas departments:

1. Substantial and sustainable investment to build **facilities and services for children and young people**.
2. Ensuring that **children and young people receive a better education and stay in school**. Illiteracy and failure to develop basic skills in the overseas departments is very prominent and many children and adolescents drop out of school, partially due to a lack of qualified teachers. This translates into challenges to becoming a part of the labour market and it affects young people's motivation and hopes, leading to social and professional exclusion. Some CNAPE members also note the high level of disillusionment among young people.
3. **Expand the number of health and social services structures**. There are not enough services

for children and adolescents, whether in terms of specialised establishments and services, healthcare, maternal and child protection, and childhood social assistance. Investment in prevention actions to combat high rates of domestic violence must be prioritised.

A good example of interventions that can help mitigate child poverty is the **Children's Network**, set up by the Groupe SOS Jeunesse in partnership with the Health Regional Agency.

The Children's Network is an experimental project that aims to provide parenting support and socio-medical assistance to young people in isolated Guyanese communities. This network is helping families in Maripasoula and Camopi with their administrative procedures, access to rights and provision of psychosocial support to both parents and school-aged children.

The Children's Network is part of the *Bien-être des Populations de l'Intérieur de Guyane* programme

(BEPI). It is based on a community approach, where citizens lead on identifying and implementing interventions based on their needs, such as suicide prevention and promoting wellbeing.

## European Child Guarantee

### France National Action Plan

The [\*Council Recommendation on a European Child Guarantee\*](#) asked Member States to submit a National Action Plan (NAP) that would outline how the Child Guarantee would be implemented at national level by 15 March 2022.

These Action Plans should outline the children most in need, the planned and existing policy actions and measures to support them, and a monitoring and evaluation framework. The plans should also be drafted in consultation with children, civil society, and national authorities.

[The National Action Plan for France](#) was published in April 2022 and the National Coordinator

is Jean Benoît Dujol, director of the Direction Générale de la cohésion sociale (DGCS). CNAPE was not involved in drafting the NAP, and they are also **not aware if children were involved in its drafting**.

According to CNAPE, the **NAP is ambitious and some of its measures are welcomed**, such as the creation of the early childhood public service, and the out of school observatory. However, many uncertainties remain, including the financing of these measures and the conditions for the coordination of these policies.

CNAPE have also expressed some concerns regarding the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the NAP. CNAPE also commented that they were unaware of any plans to involve children in the monitoring and evaluation. The NAP only reports that a protocol will be implemented with the Haut

Conseil de la Famille, de l'Enfance et de l'Âge (High Council for Family, Childhood and Age), but there is no further information about this.

## EU Funding

### Civil Society engagement in the implementation of EU funds

While there are a variety of European funds available in France for actions that invest in children, CNAPE are not aware of EU funding that can be used at national, regional, and local levels to invest in children.

### Priorities for EU funding in France

On 28 January 2021, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament reached an agreement that compels Member States with a level of child poverty above the EU average (23.4% - AROPE 2017 – 2019) to allocate

5% of European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) resources to tackle child poverty.<sup>3</sup> The rest of Member States, such as France, should allocate an 'appropriate' amount of their ESF+ resources to combat child poverty.

CNAPE calls on the government of France to prioritise investing in children through:

- **Health and prevention** – despite notable efforts, France is still failing to meet the needs on the ground. CNAPE thinks a real holistic services offer from the very beginning of early childhood is essential to maintain children's good health: parenting support, health, and prevention in school at early stages of life, and campaigns in schools against violence (domestic or school-based bullying, for example).

- **Social workers shortage** – France should raise wages for all social workers, improve their working conditions, promote social work through awareness-raising campaigns, and increase the attractiveness of the profession.



<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013.