

Improving data collection for children: Recommendations from Eurochild



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As the largest network of organisations working with and for children in Europe, Eurochild has analysed available data on various children's rights areas within the EU over the years. In this paper, we offer suggestions for data areas to prioritise and improve at the EU level, along with the relevant sources that inform our recommendations.

EU policy framework and data collection

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child places a strong emphasis on data collection. The Commission has committed to "seek solutions to address the lack of comparable, age- and sex-disaggregated data on violence against children at national and EU levels, drawing on the expertise of the Fundamental Rights Agency, as appropriate." The Commission also stated that "data collection on children involved in judicial proceedings, including in the context of specialised courts, should be improved." Additionally, "more age- and sex-disaggregation of Eurostat data, as well as data generated by other EU agencies, will be pursued, alongside research on specific thematic areas covered by this strategy."

The importance of data on children

Data is vital for shaping policies, enabling evidence-based decisions, monitoring progress, and ensuring accountability. It helps highlight inequalities, targets marginalised groups and informs interventions in areas like poverty, education, and health. Reliable data ensures policies are tailored to address real issues rather than assumptions and actually reach children who are most in need.

Disaggregated data should also adopt an intersectional approach to understand how various sources of discrimination intersect and compound one another. This would capture the nuanced experiences of children from diverse backgrounds, particularly those facing multiple forms of vulnerability. Collecting and analysing this data can better identify gaps and inequalities in policies and programmes and ensure that interventions are more effective in reaching the most in need, especially the most marginalised and disadvantaged children.

Going beyond the use of household surveys (such as the Census) as the basis for all statistics on children in Europe, including data from EU-SILC, is essential. These methods leave gaps for the most vulnerable children - children in alternative care, children on the move, and homeless children - who may not be in fixed 'family addresses' on the night of the census count.

Suggestions for data at the EU level

Based on the information we collected, together with other civil society organisations' allies, as well as information coming from our members, we would like to make the following suggestions on data that can be recommended and included in the Eurostat database:

1. Data gaps in child protection and social inclusion

Findings from Eurochild and its members show that while countries are making strides in monitoring child poverty and social exclusion, including through the European Child Guarantee, significant gaps in data availability still exist. There is a need to ensure comprehensive and disaggregated data collection that covers marginalised and hard-to-reach groups, as well as to develop mechanisms for regularly updating this data to reflect changes over time, thereby improving the accuracy and relevance of monitoring efforts. Collecting this type of data is crucial for designing evidence-based interventions and building long-term resilience for children and families. A specific focus should be given to:

- Disaggregated data on violence against children;
- The percentage of social protection benefits allocated to families with young children experiencing severe deprivation;
- Data on the number of children accessing healthcare services, including mental health;
- Data on support provided to specific groups of children, including single-parent households, children with disabilities, children on the move and children from an ethnic background;
- Data on homeless children.

Sources for additional information:

- [Eurochild 2025 Flagship Sub-Report on the European Child Guarantee: Eurochild members' perspectives;](#)
- [Eurochild 2025 Flagship Sub-Report on child protection systems in Europe;](#)
- [Feantsa 2024 Report: 9th Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2024.](#)

2. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

The *First Years First Priority Campaign* is a Europe-wide initiative aimed at leveraging EU policy and funds to drive public investment in early childhood development. While there are EU data on the rate of children enrolled in early childhood care and education, the campaign, supported by grassroots organisations, has shown that across Europe, there is no disaggregated data on ECEC and how specific groups of children are accessing it. In particular, there is the need for:

- Data on children's participation in ECEC by age and socio-economic background;
- Disaggregated data on the rate of child participation for children (disability status, migration/ethnicity status, family status).

Sources for additional information:

- [FYFP-Lessons-Learned.pdf](#);
- [Cross Country Analysis – Snapshot of ECD data and policies in nine countries - First Years First Priority](#);
- [Young Roma children and their families - First Years First Priority](#);
- [Cross Country Analysis – Snapshot of ECD data and policies in nine countries - First Years First Priority](#);
- [Young Refugee and Migrant Children and their families - First Years First Priority](#);
- [Young children with disabilities and their families – First Years First Priority](#).

3. Alternative care and deinstitutionalisation

The *DataCare project*, a joint initiative between Eurochild and UNICEF ECARO, was launched in March 2020 to map alternative care data systems across the EU and the UK. Its goal is to establish a more transparent and unified approach to data collection on alternative care across Europe.

The research showed that gaps remain in capturing data on children in alternative care, particularly regarding specific groups and types of care. While some statistics exist, the lack of standardised, disaggregated data (e.g., by age, sex, disability status) limits comprehensive analysis. Challenges include data availability, comparability, and quality due to centralised systems. Key data gaps include understanding why children enter care, assessing the effectiveness of prevention and family support systems, monitoring the transition from institutional to family-based care, and evaluating the quality of care and its outcomes for development, health, education, and well-being.

European countries should collect and report high-quality, comparable data on children in alternative care, ensuring reforms towards family- and community-based care are effectively measured. This includes disaggregating data by key characteristics, tracking children's development, monitoring reasons for entering and leaving care, integrating qualitative insights, and strengthening statistical capacity through collaboration between authorities, statisticians, and child protection professionals, all while adhering to common EU standards for data protection and comparability. More specifically, there is the need for:

- Data on why children are entering alternative care (9 out of 28 countries do not have this data);
- Data on who made the decision to place a child in alternative care (only 19 countries collect data on this);
- Standardised disaggregated data on children in alternative care (age, sex, ethnic/migrant background and disability status);
- Data on outcomes in alternative care, such as children's education, well-being, and transition into adulthood (only 14 countries collect these data);
- Data on all types of residential facilities, including those run by NGOs or church, such as children's education, well-being, and transition into adulthood (many countries do not have it);

- Data on the effectiveness of prevention, family support, and gatekeeping systems in preventing unnecessary family separation.

Sources for additional information:

- [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.](#)

4. Online child safety

In an increasingly digital world, data is crucial to ensuring that children's rights are protected and promoted online. Without reliable, disaggregated data, policymakers and stakeholders cannot fully understand the challenges children face or design effective solutions to bridge the gaps in access, literacy, and online safety. There is the specific need for:

- Data on the access of children to a stable internet connection, most notably disaggregated by rural/urban and economic backgrounds;
- Data on the availability of digital literacy programmes in formal and non-formal education;
- Disaggregated data on online violence against children, most notably by gender and age.

Sources for additional information:

- [2025 Eurochild Sub-report 'Bridging persistent gaps in children's rights online in Europe'](#);
- [2025 Eurochild position on protecting children in the digital age.](#)

Conclusions

At Eurochild, we emphasise the importance of robust, disaggregated data to inform evidence-based policies and interventions. The EU must prioritise data collection and analysis, ensuring that national governments follow suit, as outlined in the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. Without accurate and comparable data, the most marginalised children risk being overlooked. Reliable data is essential to addressing inequalities, monitoring progress, and holding decision-makers accountable. Investing in data-driven policymaking will strengthen child protection systems and advance the rights of children across Europe.

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