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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu
on behalf of the European Commission
(17.12.2025)

Since its adoption in 2021, progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee (ECG)¹. Member States prepared national action plans and submitted their first biennial progress report. Malta and Portugal, for instance, extended free childcare services to all children, and free school meals are introduced in Croatia and Luxembourg. Yet, gaps in access to key services for children in need remain². In addition, the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) slightly increased since 2019, close to 20 million in total in 2024, nearly a quarter of children in the EU –despite the EU objective of reducing it by at least five million by 2030.

Spain submitted its ECG action plan in 2022 and its implementation report in 2024. Although there is progress e.g. in quality education, gaps persist in access to services such as early childhood education and care, school meals and housing. Addressing those gaps is key, given the number of children AROPE, which slightly increased since 2019 – reaching 2 756 thousand in 2024 – and moved away from the national child poverty reduction target.

In order to step up the fight against child poverty and social exclusion, in 2026, the Commission will adopt a comprehensive EU Anti-Poverty Strategy to address structural causes of exclusion and strengthen access to essential services. The strategy will be backed by a strengthened European Child Guarantee.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2021/1004/oj/eng#:~:text=That%20Recommendation%20sets%20out%20an%20integrated%20approach%20to,to%20quality%20services%2C%20and%20children%E2%80%99s%20right%20to%20participate>.

² See the EU-level monitoring framework for the European Child Guarantee:
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/circabc-ewpp/ui/group/bab664d7-1188-47b2-9fa6-869902320ba2/library/1263d2f9-f558-4e3f-a384-9e24da0883d1/details>.