

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001544/23**  
**to the Commission**  
**Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)**  
(11 May 2023)

*Subject:* Improving standards in Greek childcare centres

Within one year, two municipal councillors resigned from the board of the Agios Stylianos municipal childcare centre in Thessaloniki on the grounds that it is 'undermanned and underfunded, lacking permanent staff and able to stay afloat only thanks to the good will of most of its employees'.

The recommended objectives of the European Child Guarantee include free education and childcare, including quality activities, healthy nutrition and healthcare.

On average, a single mother in the EU needs to spend 25% of her income on raising a child.

It is closer to 60% in Greece, making it the most expensive European country to raise a child, apart from the Netherlands.

Figures for 2022 revealed that 18.8% of Greeks were 'at risk of poverty', while the poverty rate for the past year was 28.3% according to ELSTAT.

Unfortunately, childcare centres are becoming a necessity as a result of poverty and the government accordingly has a duty to ensure compliance with European standards rather than just the bare minimum requirements.

It should be noted that a significant number of babies are entrusted to childcare centres once their parents have received the relevant government allowances.

In view of this:

1. Does the Commission consider that consistent standards must be met by childcare centres at Member State if not at EU level?
2. In view of the situation regarding childcare centres in Greece, can it make any recommendations to the government regarding the standards to be met?

Submitted: 11.5.2023

**Answer given by Vice-President Suica on behalf of the European Commission**  
(14 July 2023)

Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) <sup>(1)</sup> limits the role of the EU in the area of education to supporting, coordinating or supplementing Member States' actions. Article 165(1) TFEU <sup>(2)</sup> stipulates that the Member States remain solely responsible for the content of teaching and organisation of their education systems.

Consequently, the EU does not set binding standards but supports and guides Member States in their efforts to improve access, quality and affordability of early childhood education and care (ECEC) systems. However, the content and structure of ECEC systems remains a national competence.

The Council Recommendation establishing high-quality early childhood education and care systems <sup>(3)</sup> includes a Quality Framework, identifying components of a quality ECEC system.

The Council Recommendation on a European Child Guarantee <sup>(4)</sup> recommends effective and free access to ECEC for children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (ARPE).

The Greek action plan on its implementation includes the development of a uniform curriculum for children up to four years, an early intervention programme for children with disabilities, and the creation of new ECEC services.

<sup>(1)</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:41f89a28-1fc6-4c92-b1c8-03327d1b1ecc.0007.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:41f89a28-1fc6-4c92-b1c8-03327d1b1ecc.0007.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

<sup>(2)</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12008E165>

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019H0605%2801%29&qid=1638446515934>

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021H1004>

The Council Recommendation on Early Childhood Education and Care: Barcelona Targets 2030 <sup>(5)</sup> sets renewed targets for Member States to increase participation in ECEC and invites to close the participation gap between AROPE children and the overall population of children.

The EU supports Member States with funding through the European Social Fund Plus, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and European Regional Development Fund.

Participation in ECEC is monitored through the European Semester. Where relevant, country specific recommendations can be issued.

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<sup>(5)</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.C\\_.2022.484.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AC%3A2022%3A484%3ATOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.C_.2022.484.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AC%3A2022%3A484%3ATOC)