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REPORT

on reducing inequalities and promoting social inclusion in times of crisis for
children and their families
(2023/2066(INI))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on reducing inequalities and promoting social inclusion in times of crisis for children and their families (2023/2066(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Articles 14, 24, 32 and 33 thereof,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and its Action Plan¹, with its 2030 headline targets and the EU social scoreboard,
- having regard to the Porto declaration of 8 May 2021 and the renewed commitments at the 2023 Porto Social Forum,
- having regard to the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in New York in September 2015,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), adopted in New York on 20 November 1989,
- having regard to the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted in New York on 16 December 1966,
- having regard to the European Social Charter, adopted in Turin in 1961,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in New York on 13 December 2006,
- having regard to the United Nations resolution of 18 December 2019 on the rights of the child,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers²,
- having regard to Commission recommendation (EU) 2013/112 of 20 February 2013 entitled ‘Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage’³,
- having regard to the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on high-quality early childhood education and care systems⁴,

¹ COM(2021)0102.

² OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79.

³ OJ L 59, 2.3.2013, p. 5.

⁴ OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 4.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 September 2022 on the European care strategy (COM/2022/0440), the Council recommendation of 8 December 2022 on early childhood education and care: the Barcelona targets for 2030⁵ and the Council recommendation of 8 December 2022 on access to affordable high-quality long-term care⁶,
- having regard to the UNICEF research centre report of 2014 entitled ‘Children of the Recession: The impact of the economic crisis on child well-being in rich countries’,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 November 2015 on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 January 2021 on access to decent and affordable housing for all⁸,
- having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2021 on the European Child Guarantee⁹,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 April 2022 on the EU’s protection of children and young people fleeing the war in Ukraine¹⁰,
- having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2022 towards a common European action on care¹¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 5 October 2022 on the EU’s response to the increase in energy prices in Europe¹²,
- having regard to the Eurydice Brief of 2019 entitled ‘Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe’,
- having regard to the UNICEF report of 2020 entitled ‘Innocenti Report Card 16 – Worlds of Influence – Understanding what shapes child well-being in rich countries’,
- having regard to UNICEF’s annual report of 2021 entitled ‘Protecting child rights in a time of crises’,
- having regard to UNICEF’s annual report of 2021 entitled ‘Where do rich countries stand on childcare?’,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 24 March 2021 entitled ‘EU strategy on the rights of the child’ (COM(2021)0142),
- having regard to the final Commission report of March 2020 entitled ‘Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee’,

⁵ OJ C 484, 20.12.2022, p. 1.

⁶ OJ C 476, 15.12.2022, p. 1.

⁷ OJ C 366, 27.10.2017, p. 19.

⁸ OJ C 456, 10.11.2021, p. 145.

⁹ OJ C 506, 15.12.2021, p. 94.

¹⁰ OJ C 434, 15.11.2022, p. 50.

¹¹ OJ C 47, 7.2.2023, p. 30.

¹² OJ C 132, 14.4.2023, p. 65.

- having regard to the Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee¹³,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 7 June 2023 on a comprehensive approach to mental health (COM(2023)0298),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2020 entitled ‘A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ (COM(2020)0152),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 7 October 2020 entitled ‘A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation’ (COM(2020)0620),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2021 entitled ‘Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030’ (COM(2021)0101),
 - having regard to the Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion¹⁴,
 - having regard to the Eurochild report (2022) entitled ‘(In)visible children – Eurochild 2022 report on children in need across Europe’,
 - having regard to the Save the Children report of 2023 entitled ‘Guaranteeing Children’s Future – How COVID-19, cost-of-living and climate crises affect children in poverty and what governments in Europe need to do’,
 - having regard to the report of the International Labour Organization (ILO) – UNICEF of 2021 entitled ‘Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward’,
 - having regard to the ILO – UNICEF report of 2023 entitled ‘More than a billion reasons: The urgent need to build universal social protection for children’,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 11 May 2022 entitled ‘A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids’ (COM(2022)0212),
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A9-0360/2023),
- A. whereas the quality of environments where children are born and their living spaces have a decisive impact on the quality of their life, equal opportunities to grow healthily, their overall development and the realisation of their potential; whereas UNICEF’s First

¹³ OJ L 223, 22.6.2021, p. 14.

¹⁴ OJ C 41, 3.2.2023, p. 1.

1 000 Days campaign maintains that a child's brain develops at an unprecedented rate in the first years of life, providing a unique opportunity for the child's physical, mental, cognitive, social and emotional development; whereas each child is unique and should be treated with respect for their particularities, pace of development, areas of interest and needs; whereas the best interests of the child should be the guiding principle for all actions impacting children, as stated in the UNCRC;

- B. whereas exposure to abuse and neglect negatively affects a child's development; whereas inequalities established at a very young age negatively influence children's opportunities, well-being and health; whereas these inequalities may have life-long repercussions in their adulthood and can prevent them from realising their full potential; whereas preventing inequalities is the best policy for reducing inequalities in the long term;
- C. whereas a lack of accessible, quality, child-centred services and support for families increases the risk of child poverty and social exclusion; whereas families experience multiple and interdependent challenges that no single service or organisation can resolve, which requires a continuity of services and proper inter-service coordination to prepare and facilitate the transitions that children face;
- D. whereas in 2022, more than 19 995 million children (24.7 %, or one in four children) were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU; whereas, despite some differences, no Member State is free of child poverty and social exclusion; whereas in some Member States this risk exceeds 30 %; whereas recent figures show an increase in this indicator in the last four years; whereas, as recently as in 2022, charitable organisations recorded an increase in requests for support from social services¹⁵;
- E. whereas in 2022, the percentage of children (under the age of 18) in the EU who were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, at 21.6 %, was greater than that of adults; whereas children were at greater risk of poverty or social exclusion than adults in 18 of the 27 EU Member States in 2022; whereas over one fifth (22.4 %) of the EU population living in households with dependent children was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2022; whereas in 2022, 61.9 % of children whose parents' level of education was low were at risk of poverty and social exclusion, compared with 10.2 % of children whose parents' level of education was high¹⁶;
- F. whereas child poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon stemming from household poverty, meaning that low-income and lower-education families, single-parent families – mostly made up of women and their children – large disadvantaged families, families living in disadvantaged regions, families from different ethnic minorities and families with children or parents with disabilities are at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion and have a higher probability of intergenerational transmission of poverty; whereas the redistribution of wealth (through wages and social transfers) has a decisive impact on social inequality, the risk of poverty and social exclusion, and, consequently, on the risk of child poverty; whereas this phenomenon requires a multidimensional response to prevent inequalities from mutually reinforcing each other, with combined universal and targeted measures; whereas these necessarily include the creation of jobs

¹⁵ Eurodiaconia and Caritas Europa, [Survey on energy poverty/cost-of-living crisis](#), 2022.

¹⁶ Eurostat, '[1 in 4 children in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion](#)', 28 October 2021.

and should ensure employment quality and stability and guarantee and strengthen social rights, anti-discrimination measures and family and child benefits; whereas national child allowances are an essential measure to help families in need and to ensure universal access to quality and affordable public services;

- G. whereas in 2022, 16.8 % of the EU population lived in overcrowded households and 9.3 % were unable to keep their home adequately warm; whereas 8.3 % of the EU population spent 40 % or more of their household disposable income on housing;
- H. whereas in 2022, 56 % of people living in single-adult households with dependent children in the EU were unable to meet unexpected financial expenses; whereas, in 2020, single-parent families, especially families headed by single mothers, are at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion (42.1 % compared to 29.6 % in family units with two adults and three or more children¹⁷); whereas this is related to the feminisation of poverty, women's over-representation in precarious and poorly paid work and as part-time workers, their overload of care responsibilities and the pay gap between men and women; whereas the difference in the employment rate of men and women without children stands at 1 %; whereas for those who have a child younger than six the rate stands at 21 % and climbs to 37 % for those with three children¹⁸;
- I. whereas children who grow up in poverty and social exclusion find it harder to succeed at school, remain healthy and reach their full potential later in life; whereas social investment in children's early years generates significant social-economical returns, contributes to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, and, as such, should not be considered a cost; whereas the economic impact of childhood poverty and socio-economic disadvantages, as well as their repercussions on working adults, is estimated at 3.4 % of EU countries' gross domestic product each year;
- J. whereas poverty and social exclusion are related to the migration, minority or disability status of children and their parents; whereas migrant children are over-represented in the group at risk of poverty; whereas not having a nationality or identity documents makes it difficult for stateless children to access some of the most fundamental rights, such as birth registration, education, healthcare, social security and housing, and exposes them to greater risks of abuse and exploitation; whereas in April 2023, as a consequence of the Russian invasion, almost 4 million non-EU citizens fled Ukraine to an EU Member State;
- K. whereas almost 83 % of Roma¹⁹ children in the EU live in a household that is at risk of poverty; whereas one in five Roma children lived in a household without indoor tap water in 2021; whereas the proportion of Roma children experiencing severe material deprivation strongly exceeds the share of vulnerable children in the general population; whereas in 2022, six out of 10 Roma children did not have access to quality early-

¹⁷ Eurostat, '[1 in 4 children in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion](#)', 28 October 2021.

¹⁸ Eurofound, 'Living and Working Conditions in Europe 2021', p. 73.

¹⁹ In accordance with the [EU Roma strategic framework 2020-2030](#), the reference to 'Roma', as an umbrella term, encompasses a wide range of different people of Romani origin such as: Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels and Boyash/Rudari. It also encompasses groups such as Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as traveller populations, including ethnic Travellers or those designated under the administrative term gens du voyage and people who identify as Gypsies, Tsiganes or Tziganes, without denying their specificities. This definition should be taken into account throughout the whole report.

childhood services and four out of 10 Roma families with children under six did not receive any kind of subsidy or similar support;

- L. whereas the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rising cost of living and the war in Ukraine have exacerbated the economic and social vulnerabilities of children and their families, especially the low- and middle-income households that have been most affected by the pandemic and previous crises; whereas current global social and economic volatility, as well as the risks generated by climate change, increase the possibility of new crises; whereas counter-cyclical responses to recent crises have proved to be more effective in tackling poverty and social exclusion than the fiscal consolidation measures based on austerity and spending cuts advocated in the 2008-2013 crisis;
- M. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the difficulties faced by children, due to the disruption of daily life and social contacts, the closure of schools, the reduced capacity to provide protection from domestic violence, abuse and neglect during lockdown and the disruption of basic social services; whereas these difficulties impacted more children in vulnerable situations who did not have the equipment, internet coverage or even electricity for online schooling and might have lost their one daily warm meal or their access to heating;
- N. whereas the EPSR Action Plan, adopted in 2021, aims to reduce the number of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion by at least 5 million by 2030; whereas Member States have adopted national poverty reduction targets; whereas achieving this target would mean around 15 million children in the EU would still be at risk of poverty and social exclusion by that time; whereas, without adequate measures, this number is projected to further increase with the emergence of new complex and intertwined social crises;
- O. whereas eradicating child poverty is an indispensable stepping stone in constructing a just, equal and social Europe for current and future generations; whereas socio-economic status should never be a barrier to children's access to essential services; whereas increased support is needed to ensure that children and families have access to essential services;
- P. whereas EU financing enables investment at national level to combat child poverty and promote social inclusion; whereas, in addition to the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), other sources can be directly or indirectly used to finance programmes that have an impact on the lives of children and their families in all sorts of ways;
- Q. whereas all children, parents, families and carers should be protected from discrimination, such as discrimination on the grounds of sex, language, sexual and/or gender identity, religion or belief, political or ideological beliefs, national, racial, ethnic or social origin, belonging to a national minority, socio-economic situation, disability and other special needs, age or any other status;
- R. whereas families are increasingly diverse; whereas child support and family policies do not always reflect and are not sufficiently adapted to family diversity and family living arrangements (e.g. families with unmarried parents, children of separated parents living in two households or children living in a large blended family, foster families and

rainbow families), to the detriment of families' living standards, access to social protection programmes and benefits and their resilience to crises; whereas the EU and the Member States must guarantee the legal, economic and social protection of families;

- S. whereas on 14 June 2021, the Council adopted its Recommendation on a European Child Guarantee, in order to ensure that children in need have access to key services, for example, free care services and education for early childhood, free education (including additional activities in schools and at least one healthy meal per school day), free healthcare, healthy nutrition and adequate housing; whereas this instrument represents an opportunity to reduce poverty and inequalities and promote the social inclusion of children; whereas the European Child Guarantee established that children in vulnerable situations should be targeted as a priority²⁰; whereas all Member States, in order to demonstrate their commitment to an integrated policy aimed at breaking the vicious circle of poverty, are required to allocate an appropriate amount of their ESF+ resources for the implementation of the Child Guarantee national plans; whereas, in October 2023, three Member States had still not submitted their national action plans;
- T. whereas, under the UNCRC, to which all the Member States are signatories, all children should be given the right to education, healthcare services, housing and protection, to take part in decisions that affect them, to leisure and free time, to a balanced diet and to receive care in a family environment;
- U. whereas the Council adopted the Recommendation on the revision of the Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care which includes a proposal to introduce a legal entitlement to early childhood education and care;
- V. whereas in the EU in 2022, only 35.7 %²¹ of children under the age of three had access to a formal early childhood education and care (ECEC) system, while this value goes up to 88 % for children between the age of three and the minimum compulsory age to start primary school; whereas only seven EU Member States guarantee a place in an ECEC system for every child from the age of six months; whereas several Member States guarantee a funded place in the childcare system only from the age of three; whereas the availability of free ECEC increases considerably from the age of three and this trend continues at each year of age, becoming almost universal in the whole of Europe in the final year before compulsory primary education starts²²; whereas in Europe the majority of families have to pay tuition fees to access ECEC services for children under three; whereas the lack of access to these services – often due to the interplay of scarce availability and elevated, hidden and out-of-pocket costs – affects families from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, single-parent families and families from

²⁰ The use of the expression 'children in vulnerable situations' or 'children from disadvantaged backgrounds/households' in this report refers to the definition enshrined in the Child Guarantee, which includes the following groups: homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation; children with disabilities; children with mental health issues; children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma; children in alternative, especially institutional, care; children in precarious family situations. In this report, this definition also includes LGBTIQ+ children.

²¹ Eurostat, '[Children in formal childcare or education by age group and duration - % over the population of each age group – EU-SILC survey](#)', 29.9.2023; data corresponds to the sum of the percentage of children under three who are in formal childcare for 1-29 hours per week and of those who are in formal childcare over 30 hours per week.

²² European Commission, Eurydice Brief, '[Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe](#)', 2019.

less developed regions and territories, which increases the risk of children's early social exclusion; whereas, even in countries where the average level of availability of ECEC services is high, the participation of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in ECEC is hampered by a lack of childcare facilities;

- W. whereas ECEC has a decisive impact on health and the cognitive and social-emotional development of children; whereas working parents who do not have access to a childcare facility are often forced to leave children in informal care, including in uncertified care networks; whereas high-quality inclusive ECEC ensures equal educational opportunities for those children and fosters the integration of parents, especially mothers, into the labour market; whereas an inclusive education addresses the broad range of needs among all pupils by bolstering participation in terms of learning, cultural interactions and sense of community; whereas such services must have adequate financial and human resources to identify and support children experiencing particular difficulties;
- X. whereas spending on education, especially as regards school materials and transportation, is essentially borne by households in most countries and is one of the main reasons for dropping out of school; whereas the EU average rate of early school dropouts stands at 10 %²³, but this value is higher for specific groups, such as Roma children and children with disabilities;
- Y. whereas in 2021, 3.6 % of children in the EU below the age of 16 had unmet medical needs and 4.4 % of children reported a disability²⁴; whereas even in countries where the right to health is enshrined in law, inequalities persist and many families do not have access or timely access to adequate healthcare and have extremely limited access to essential services such as consultations with family doctors and nurses, mental health and psychosocial support or dental care, especially because of inadequate public services; whereas children born into a situation of poverty and social exclusion are at greater risk of having more health problems; whereas the disparity in the EU between urban and rural areas and more developed and less developed regions for access to quality health services and facilities is widening²⁵;
- Z. whereas sexual health is fundamental to the overall health and well-being of individuals, couples and families; whereas some Member States are attempting to further limit access to sexual and reproductive health and rights through highly restrictive laws that put at risk the health of women during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as the health of children;
- AA. whereas vaccination is the main tool to prevent serious, contagious and sometimes deadly diseases; whereas vaccination rates against measles – an indicator of child general vaccination schemes – have fallen in 14 out of 35 OECD countries²⁶;

²³ Eurostat, '[Early leavers from education and training](#)', 2023.

²⁴ Eurostat, 2023, '[Health statistics - children](#)'.

²⁵ Eurostat, 2022, '[Urban-rural Europe – quality of life in rural areas](#)';

OECD iLibrary, 'Delivering Quality Education and Health Care to All: Preparing Regions for Demographic Change – [Chapter 4. Delivering quality health services in rural communities](#)', 5.3.2021.

²⁶ UNICEF, 2020, 'Innocenti Report Card 16. Worlds of Influence - Understanding What Shapes Child Well-being in Rich Countries', p. 4.

- AB. whereas mental health well-being for children is key, as it allows them to reach developmental milestones, learn ways of coping with problems and acquire social and emotional skills; whereas adverse childhood experiences, discrimination, inadequate access to services and unstable environments are some of the main causes of mental health problems developing in early age; whereas far-reaching crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic put at risk the mental health and well-being of entire generations of children; whereas the prevalence of mental health problems is three times higher among children from low-income families²⁷;
- AC. whereas the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasises that breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure children's long-term health and survival and recommends that infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of their lives; whereas, however, globally, only two out of five infants have access to breastfeeding²⁸;
- AD. whereas children with disabilities and children born to parents with disabilities are still exposed to discrimination and violation of their rights through persistent barriers in all areas of life, namely inadequate access to childcare facilities, nutrition that meets their needs and opportunities to attend and participate in inclusive educational activities and a lack of inclusion in standard schools, healthcare and spaces that do not adequately respond to their mobility and psychosocial needs; whereas these barriers and lack of accessible quality care and support services for persons with disabilities and other persons in need of care and support are particularly manifest in times of crises, leading to an additional burden on informal, especially family carers, the majority of whom are women;
- AE. whereas poverty is an important risk marker for entry into alternative care as it increases the vulnerability of children and their families and may lead to a situation where parents can no longer provide adequate care for their children; whereas an estimated 345 000 children in the EU still live in institutions²⁹ and 758 018 children were in alternative care in 2021³⁰; whereas child protection measures, including deinstitutionalisation, are also essential for children to achieve their rights and reach their full potential; whereas institutions need qualified staff to ensure qualified educational opportunities and to tackle abuses and child exploitation;
- AF. whereas all children have the right to be protected from abuse, violence and neglect; whereas research proves that the risk of abuse, violence and neglect increases in cases of financial pressures on families and a lack of adequate social services;
- AG. whereas, in Europe, one in five children is a victim of some form of abuse or sexual violence, and most abuse occurs within families and/or care-related institutions;

²⁷ Save the Children Europe, 2023, '[Guaranteeing Children's Future: How COVID-19, cost-of-living and climate crises affect children in poverty and what governments in Europe need to do](#)'.

²⁸ UNICEF, 2020, '[Breastfeeding practices worldwide](#)'.

²⁹ Lerch, V and Severinsson, A.N., 2019, 'Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee: Target Group Discussion Paper on Children in Alternative Care'.

³⁰ UNICEF and Eurochild, November 2021, 'Children in alternative care: Comparable statistics to monitor progress on deinstitutionalisation across the European Union'.

whereas children represent around a quarter of victims of trafficking in the EU, the majority of whom are girls abducted for purposes of sexual exploitation³¹;

- AH. whereas peer violence and bullying are a serious problem that harms relations among children, especially in schools, and is detrimental to the mental health of children and young people; whereas 23 % of students have reported suffering harassment at school at least once a month³²;
- AI. whereas the risks of pervasive digital technologies for the health and well-being of children and their families should not be underestimated; whereas children have the right to be protected from the marketing and advertising practices of commercial operators, including in digital spaces; whereas the design of current online products and services exposes children from an early age to addictive online content; whereas children lack the basic necessary skills and know-how to consume information in a safe and trusted manner; whereas this has consequences on children's mental health, including sleep deprivation, anxiety, depression, lack of attention and, ultimately, brain development in the long term; whereas increased internet use can put children at greater risk of online harm such as sexual exploitation, cyber stalking and cyberbullying; whereas a third of girls and 20 % of boys have encountered disturbing content once a month in the past year; whereas 15 % of LGBTQI+ respondents aged 15-17 have suffered online harassment because of their sexual orientation or gender³³;
- AJ. whereas only one in four children consider that their rights are respected by society in general³⁴; whereas children have difficulties in gaining access to justice, as the structure of judicial proceedings is not adapted to their needs;
- AK. whereas 3.6 million children on the European continent are engaged in work³⁵, mainly in agriculture and construction; whereas it is essential to adopt measures to eradicate child labour in the European Union and to prevent the emergence of new cases of child labour, especially in the context of crises;
- AL. whereas environmental problems such as pollution, contaminated land and unsafe drinking water pose a threat to the health of all children, with a disproportionate impact on those living in poverty and vulnerable conditions; whereas the right to a safe, secure and clean environment for children and the right to a future free of environmental pollution and protection from the negative impact of climate change could be enhanced by a better, child-sensitive implementation of the current environmental *acquis* in the Member States;
- AM. whereas play is the natural and the most effective way for children to learn about themselves and their social and natural environment and to express themselves in a symbolic way; whereas this forms an essential basis for their cognitive and emotional development, functional autonomy, lifestyle habits, interaction with others and conflict

³¹ European Commission, EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, 24 March 2021.

³² OECD, 'PISA 2018 Results: What School Life Means for Students' Lives'; on average across the OECD countries.

³³ European Commission, 2021: EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, p.18.

³⁴ European Commission, 2021: EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, p.4.

³⁵ This represents the sum of northern, southern, western and eastern European figures: International Labour Organization, 2021, '[Child labour statistical profile: Europe and Central Asia](#)'.

management; whereas children's participation in society, cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport directly contributes to their well-being and helps them to thrive;

- AN. whereas financial constraints hamper the participation of children from disadvantaged families in non-formal educational and extracurricular activities, which amplifies social inequalities in the early years;

Investing in reducing inequalities

1. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to significantly increase and ensure sustainable and adequate public investment in policies that have a direct and indirect impact on children's lives by guaranteeing universal, inclusive and affordable high-quality public services, such as care, ECEC, education, healthcare, social services, water and sanitation, as well as universal access to decent housing, energy, transport, food, cultural and leisure activities, and easy and free access to green spaces, complemented by effective targeted solutions, in particular for the most vulnerable;
2. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to bolster, at every level, mechanisms for ensuring the meaningful, safe and inclusive participation of children, families, carers and civil society organisations in the development, implementation, monitoring and assessment of these policies; stresses the importance of a multi-sectoral approach in which all relevant stakeholders work in partnership to develop an integrated strategy to tackle inequalities in childhood with the provision of child protection and family welfare services, for which structural investments and effective public expenditure, using EU and national funds, are most needed;
3. Stresses that social inclusion policies must enable children's overall development and the fulfilment of each child's potential in relation to their physical health and well-being, social skills, emotional development, communication skills, general knowledge and cognitive and language development;
4. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote the creation of quality jobs with open-ended forms of employment and innovative forms of work with strong labour rights, based on decent and fair wages and decent working conditions that guarantee access to social, occupational safety and health protection, and robust collective bargaining as a crucial mechanism for representing and defending workers' rights; believes that these measures are also necessary to improve the attractiveness of professions in the care and social sector and respond to the current labour shortages; underlines the importance of guaranteeing a work-life balance by, inter alia, maternity, paternity, care and parental leave, and flexible working arrangements for parents and carers, including, for example, the option of reduced working time;
5. Stresses that the disruptions to schooling during the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated inequalities in learning; calls on the Member States to set up additional short-term learning programmes, such as summer schools or tutoring, in order to reduce current learning gaps, targeting, in particular, children from vulnerable households; calls on the Member States to include digital skills in the curricula of all educational institutions and to provide the necessary training and equipment for teachers and pupils; calls on the Member States to guarantee the rights and protection of children in times of crisis, in particular continued access to basic services; encourages the Member States to assess

the effectiveness of measures adopted during previous crises in order to prepare a range of measures that can be activated, tailored and targeted in the event of new crises, considering that some of the measures taken during the pandemic (such as working from home, online teaching and social care/counselling), although necessary at the time, proved to have a negative impact on promoting the social inclusion of children and their families;

6. Acknowledges the critical role of family and child benefits, in particular for vulnerable households, as part of fair and inclusive social protection systems, which need to be adapted to the variety of family arrangements and provide timely access to social protection and adequate support for all, including for refugee and migrant children and their families, according to Member States' practices; calls on the Member States to raise awareness about eligibility for social benefits, to simplify administrative procedures and to facilitate access thereto, in order to tackle low take-up while combating stigma and stereotypes about poverty;
7. Calls on the EU budgetary authorities to take advantage of the upcoming mid-term review of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027 to strengthen and make better use of the ESF+, the European Regional Development Fund, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, InvestEU, as well as the Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF), in order to strengthen structural policies and social support for children and families while accounting for the multi-sectoral nature of poverty; reiterates its repeated calls for the urgent increase in funding of the Child Guarantee, with a dedicated budget of at least EUR 20 billion for the period 2021-2027; insists on making this dedicated budget part of the revised MFF and reinforced ESF+; calls on the Commission to make available – and on the Member States to make full use of – all available resources to effectively implement the Child Guarantee, including the ESF+, ReactEU and the RRF; stresses that the use of these funds should be transparent and require the involvement of civil society and relevant stakeholders in planning, implementation and evaluation; reiterates its call that all Member States should allocate at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources to targeted actions and structural reforms to combat child poverty; stresses that this threshold is only a minimum and that the Member States are encouraged to use a higher proportion of ESF+ to combat child poverty;
8. Stresses that EU funds are complex to manage, which makes them inaccessible to organisations with fewer technical resources; highlights that more flexible, simplified management procedures and investment in technical assistance close to where it is needed can contribute to empowering people and more organisations supporting children and young people; underlines that according to the ESF+ Regulation³⁶, the co-financing rate to support most deprived persons must be 90 %, which should facilitate access to this financing for programmes and actions designed to help these populations escape poverty;
9. Stresses that universal and long-term policies offer better protection against the multiple causes of poverty and social exclusion by providing structural responses that can, when necessary, be supplemented by immediate, one-off or temporary targeted support

³⁶ 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 (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 21).

measures, contributing to strengthening the resilience and autonomy of families and meeting the needs of their children;

10. Calls on the Member States to devote greater attention to the availability of universal access to public services in remote regions in order to reduce disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and to offer equal access to quality education, infrastructure and healthcare for all children;
11. Calls on the Member States to implement legislation that protects or enhances maternity, paternity and parental rights, allowing for a more effective work-life balance and a more equal distribution of care and housework, making it possible for women to return to work after pregnancy and maternity leave and allowing for an appropriate amount of time and adequate facilities for breastfeeding after returning to work; calls on the Member States to ensure structural investments in easily accessible medical facilities in order to strengthen quality pre-natal and post-natal care; highlights that strengthening this legislation has the potential to greatly boost the fight against gender-based discrimination and pay discrimination;
12. Welcomes the Commission proposal for a regulation on the recognition of parenthood between Member States; calls on the Council to swiftly adopt it; recalls that the fragmentation of parenthood rights across the EU constitutes an economic, legal and emotional burden for children and their families and contradicts the principle of the ‘best interest of the child’;
13. Calls on the Member States to set up counselling structures to support families and ensure children’s access to justice; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote family-centred childhood policies and intervention, paying attention to the needs and aspirations of families, as an element to enhance cohesion in society;
14. Stresses that child poverty and social exclusion require the adoption of a life-cycle approach which contributes to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty risks and reflects the different needs of early childhood, primary childhood and adolescence, by measuring the number of deprivations each child experiences simultaneously, thereby identifying the most deprived children and measuring not only monetary poverty but also multidimensional deprivations; calls on the Member States to identify children at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion affected by the cost of living crisis, including children in the most vulnerable situations, in order to ensure their effective and free access to high-quality key services, such as ECEC, education and school-based activities, healthcare, as well as to one healthy meal each school day and effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing; calls on the Commission to draw up, without delay, an ambitious EU-integrated anti-poverty strategy;
15. Calls on the Commission, in the context of the annual cycles of the European Semester (ES) for the coordination of economic and social policies, to recommend reforms to promote social inclusion and the reduction of inequalities by strengthening public services and involving social partners at European, national and regional level in the design and implementation of national reform programmes, country reports and country-specific recommendations; calls for the monitoring of developments in child poverty indicators, as part of the ES, in order to be able to offer all Member States

adequate information to tackle this problem; stresses, moreover, that cuts in public services have undermined social and labour rights in some Member States; calls on the Member States to increase investment in the availability and accessibility of professional care services as a means of reducing the burden on informal carers and ensuring minimum quality standards in care; takes the view that insufficient investment in child policies constitutes a failure to meet international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

16. Regrets the low level of ambition of the targets for reducing child poverty under the EPSR Action Plan and notes that this will not be sufficient to lift all vulnerable children out of poverty; stresses that the impacts of COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis require even more ambitious goals; regrets that only 19 Member States have established national child poverty reduction targets to be met by 2030; calls on the Member States to adopt ambitious targets for child poverty reduction, with a view to its eradication;
17. Stresses the need to introduce a social convergence framework within the ES in order to detect and correct social imbalances while assessing policies for children and ensuring the effective implementation of the EPRS, including a scoreboard system; calls for the outcome of the social convergence framework exercise to be reflected in country-specific recommendations;

Strong public policies to reduce inequalities

18. Stresses, in view of the difficulties in accessing ECEC throughout the Union, the need for increased investment in inclusive and high-quality ECEC services, without neglecting children aged 0-3 and children from economically and socially disadvantaged families, thereby creating or bolstering a public and universal response from the very beginning of the education process and guaranteeing a level playing field and equal access to education for every person; stresses that there must be a sufficient number of childcare services that are equally accessible throughout the EU; regrets the Council's downgrading of the Commission's proposal for ensuring that at least 50 % of children below the age of three can participate in ECEC to 45 %;
19. Stresses the need to improve the quality of ECEC services through adequate financial and human resources and appropriate pedagogical training of staff with knowledge of child psychology and child chronobiology in order to ensure the overall development of children; stresses that, in order to allow for this improvement, Member States must ensure that these staff members have decent wages and opportunities for career development;
20. Calls on the Member States to facilitate access to ECEC services, for example, by informing parents of available places or assisting vulnerable families with administrative procedures, and to adapt these services to the realities of the labour market; recalls the duty of the Member States to ensure universal access to public childcare services; notes that when this access is not sufficient, private, home-based and cooperative facilities should be able to complement public ECEC services, provided that they integrally meet the same quality standards for children's overall development;

21. Calls on the Member States to ensure that all children have access to formal and non-formal, public, inclusive and high-quality education, including extracurricular activities at all ages, fostering their emotional, social, cognitive and physical development; calls on the Member States to establish appropriate teacher-student ratios, with a needs-based design, safeguarding the safety and well-being of children, maximising the education systems' impact in creating equal opportunities and breaking intergenerational cycles of exclusion;
22. Highlights the importance of investments in public and free education that ensure an individualised approach for children belonging to more vulnerable social groups; stresses that such an approach should be developed in collaboration between teachers, social and educational specialists, families and communities; calls on the Commission and the Member States to combat school segregation and to develop policies, strategies and tools for advancing inclusive education; notes that in very limited and specific situations, such as in cases of severe disabilities, there may be a need to offer specialised classes or schools to children, while highlighting that these should be last resort measures due to the risk of discrimination and exclusion that come with specialised classes or schools; calls on the Commission and the Member States to specifically ensure access to inclusive, high-quality education for all persons with disabilities in order to tackle the difficulties that affect them;
23. Highlights the experience of some Member States that ensure that textbooks and teaching materials, as well as school transport and healthy meals, educational and cultural outings and supervision, are provided free of charge; recommends extending this system to all Member States as a means of ensuring equal access to education and as an important means of financial support for the most vulnerable families; calls on the Member States to exchange best practices about these experiences and programmes; recommends that Member States provide access to healthy free school meals at least for children in vulnerable situations, without stigmatisation or direct or indirect discrimination; stresses that children in need should also receive the equivalent of a free meal on the days when they are not in school;
24. Calls on the Member States to guarantee universal access to public, affordable and quality maternal, new-born and paediatric healthcare, including primary prevention, immunisation programmes and primary care, access to diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation and access to the most diverse range of medical and therapeutic specialist treatment, guaranteeing women the right to sexual and reproductive health, maternity care and home visits in the pre- and post-natal care period and ensuring access to family doctors, nurses, dentists, nutritionists, speech and language therapists, ophthalmologists, family counselling services and psychologists and other mental health specialists, regardless of the ethnic, social or administrative status of the parents; highlights the value of vaccinating children and the need to fight the hotbeds of misinformation with regard to the benefits of vaccination; is concerned over the persistent shortage of medicines for children and calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure sufficient production and stockpiling of important paediatric primary care medicines;
25. Calls on the Member States to establish partnerships between education, health and social services in order to facilitate access to care and support for children who need it, for example, in the provision of systematic hearing and sight tests for children directly

at school; invites the Member States to facilitate an exchange of information across various social, educational and health services regarding children's development needs with the prior agreement of their parents, while ensuring respect for the right to privacy of children and their families and the best interests of the child;

26. Calls on the Member States to properly design, fund and implement national strategies to ensure that children and their families have access to healthy and affordable food; recalls that the persistence of limited access to fresh, affordable and healthy food fuels health problems, in particular for lower income households and vulnerable people living in poorly connected and serviced areas; urges the Member States to include healthy food in their public health strategies by encouraging diet diversification and, where needed, food supplements, in order to protect children from the negative effects of malnutrition or undernutrition; calls for actions to incentivise the availability of healthy and affordable foods while discouraging the consumption of high-sugar and fattening foods and beverages by children and adolescents;
27. Calls on the Member States to ensure and strengthen smooth cooperation and adequate financial support to dedicated food-aid non-governmental organisations, as well as to reinforce cooperation with relevant structures in the public and private sectors in order to target the economic impacts of the current crisis more efficiently and to better support affected families; stresses the need to pay urgent attention to the current food-aid crisis faced by both relevant structures and economically vulnerable families and their children; invites the Member States to exchange knowledge and experience on supporting parents' employment through the EU Mutual Learning Programme;
28. Believes that psychological struggles emerging from poverty and social exclusion have not been sufficiently taken into account in the Commission's mental health strategy and national action plans; calls on the Member States to support families in vulnerable situations through individualised and tailored social services and mental health and psychosocial support;
29. Takes note of the Commission communication of 11 May 2022 entitled 'A digital decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids' and calls for an overarching policy aimed at protecting children's mental health from overexposure to and overconsumption of online content;
30. Asks the Commission and the Member States to actively promote breastfeeding, in line with WHO recommendations;
31. Welcomes the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 as a concrete way to ensure equal rights of persons with disabilities and their full participation in society; stresses the need to ensure that disabilities are duly taken into account when designing, implementing and monitoring EU policies and initiatives, especially the barriers and challenges faced by children; calls on the Commission to speed up its proposal³⁷ for a framework for social services of excellence for persons with disabilities and to ensure that this framework also enhances access for children with disabilities and children with parents with disabilities to social services of

³⁷ European Commission, May 2022, '[Check progress on the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)'.

excellence; emphasises that children in need of care and with disabilities and/or cognitive disorders need specific and targeted measures, especially in times of crisis, as well as special educational and care services in order to counteract inequalities and the lack of social integration;

32. Calls on the Member States to develop specific measures to support parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities and to ensure accessible information about the support available to them; acknowledges the benefits of family-centred early childhood intervention and calls on the Commission and the Member States to mainstream it in all the relevant policy areas, such as policies for the protection of children's rights and persons with disabilities, and to foster an exchange of information and best practices about it; calls on the Commission and the Member States to incorporate the disability perspective and meaningfully consult persons with disabilities and their representative organisations when planning actions to ensure an adequate standard of living and social protection of persons with disabilities, particularly in times of crises and transitions;
33. Calls on the Member States to enhance the effectiveness of social services and social protection, including by addressing shortages of workers and investing in their professional development through continuing training opportunities, as well as ensuring adequate wages and decent working conditions;
34. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make the widest possible use of the European Child Guarantee as a social response facilitating the social integration and inclusion of children and families suffering from poverty and social exclusion, particularly those from identified target groups and in the most remote areas; stresses that the funds available are clearly insufficient to address the existing structural problems, which have been aggravated by the cumulative effect of successive crises and the lack of public investment; calls on the Commission and the Member States to scale up investment and strengthen child protection systems and social welfare services, allowing for the swift implementation of the Child Guarantee in the context of new crises and the growing number³⁸ of children in need;
35. Reiterates its request to those Member States which have not yet published their national action plan under the European Child Guarantee to do so, so that children in need can benefit from it without delay; calls on the Member States to regularly review and update their national action plans, fulfil their political commitment with comprehensive ambitious actions and to put in place monitoring and evaluation systems, by setting clear, multi-sectoral and comparable metrics, investing in efficient and effective data collection and more specific targets and reflecting the objectives of the Child Guarantee; calls on the Member States to ensure coherence and synergies between the European Child Guarantee as an anti-poverty strategy and the Reinforced Youth Guarantee as an active labour market policy, in order to cover the entire age span from birth to adulthood;
36. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase social support specifically aimed at parents who are unemployed or trapped in in-work poverty, in particular

³⁸ Save the Children Europe, 2023, '[Guaranteeing Children's Future: How COVID-19, cost-of-living and climate crises affect children in poverty and what governments in Europe need to do](#)'.

through a guaranteed minimum income; calls on the Commission, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, to propose a framework directive on minimum income that sets minimum common standards and methodologies to guarantee accessible, enabling and adequate minimum income schemes;

37. Highlights the right to decent, affordable, inclusive, energy-efficient and quality housing that meets the needs of children and their families and ensures their well-being, privacy and quality of life; deplores housing policies that are driving families out of cities in several Member States, distorting sociability mechanisms and weakening primary support networks, thereby increasing children's exclusion; calls on the Member States to promote a public housing policy that tackles property speculation, invest in social and sustainable housing and guarantee the right thereto; calls on the Commission to develop an ambitious plan to meet the housing needs of all EU citizens, support the development of social housing while making housing subsidies more accessible and eradicate homelessness by 2030 through preventive and housing-led strategies; recalls that deteriorating housing stock – which affects energy efficiency – and rising energy prices leave children and their families vulnerable;
38. Calls on the Member States to assess the impact of inflation and the rise in the cost of living on the various socio-economic groups in order to develop targeted measures for the most vulnerable households, specifically with regard to food, energy, transport, internet connectivity and other essential goods, taking into account child and gender-sensitive approach, in order to reduce the impact of the rise in the cost of living on children and their families and to counteract it financially; calls on the Member States to develop targeted measures to tackle these impacts and to facilitate the adjustment of social benefits and wages in line with inflation;

Tackling discrimination and social exclusion

39. Condemns all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and negligence, including online, with regard to children, as well as violence against women, domestic and gender-based violence; calls on the Member States to develop, strengthen and implement integrated prevention and protection systems for children and other victims with a view to eradicating violence, abuse, exploitation and negligence; underlines that these systems should be developed in cooperation with all relevant public services (including schools and health institutions), allowing for a rapid response that protects and empowers children and promotes their best interests; calls on the Member States to pay particular attention to violence among children, including cyber-violence and bullying, as well as to exchange best practices in that area, in order to develop efficient responses to prevent negative consequences on children;
40. Condemns all forms of discrimination; stresses that discrimination has a direct repercussion for children and their families by hampering their access to the labour market, housing and essential services; calls on the Commission and the Member States to raise public awareness in order to put an end to the stigmatisation, stereotyping and social exclusion of children and families in vulnerable situations, so that people understand that families may have no control over the circumstances that make them vulnerable;

41. Deplores the fact that the cycle of poverty in Roma families often leads to Roma children being over-represented in social protection institutions in comparison to non-Roma children; highlights the fact that Roma children and their families are often the first to suffer in times of crisis; calls on the Commission and the Member States to pay specific attention in the implementation of the Child Guarantee to the unique challenges faced by Roma children, who often experience extreme poverty, exclusion, and discrimination in all spheres of life; calls on the Member States to prioritise effective measures and specific actions for improving the status of the family and the living conditions, health and well-being of children and early learning and for fostering responsive parenting in the implementation of the EU Roma Strategic Framework;
42. Stresses the need to invest in support and follow-up for refugee and migrant children, especially unaccompanied minors and stateless children and their families, and to ensure sufficient and qualified carers, quality host facilities and welcoming communities, in order to reduce inequalities and promote the social inclusion of children and their families; stresses the need to ensure that all policies and decisions concerned are aligned with the EU strategy on the rights of the child; recommends that the inclusion process for unaccompanied children and young asylum seekers minimises the use of institutionalisation;
43. Recommends that the Member States develop proactive social policies to tackle the root causes of child institutionalisation, ensuring that it is not because of poverty and exclusion that children are institutionalised; calls on the Member States to ensure that institutionalising children and young people happens only as a last resort and to invest in placing children and young people in alternative care systems in order to ease the transition from institutional care to family and community-based care, in full respect of the obligations enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other key human rights instruments;
44. Calls on the Member States to pay specific attention to the problems of child labour in Europe and to evaluate the potential impact on child labour caused by budgetary cuts in education and training, as well in social policies and support to families; welcomes, in this sense, the recommendations³⁹ to eradicate the causes of child labour; calls on the Member States to guarantee that labour inspectorates have adequate resources to collect data, monitor child labour and carry out preventive and remedial actions;
45. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to participate actively in combating the trafficking of children for any form of exploitation, including work, forced marriage, illegal adoption, illegal activities and sexual exploitation;

The right of every child to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, participation and play

46. Highlights the fact that environmental pollution and climate change have a disproportionate impact on lower income groups and that there is subsequently a higher incidence of health related problems, lower life expectancy and fewer life opportunities for children; highlights the importance of adapting living, care and education facilities

³⁹ ILO–UNICEF, 2021, ‘Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward’.

to climate emergencies and of mainstreaming a child-sensitive approach to this problem, including these facilities' involvement in related activities and the acquisition of skills necessary for the climate transition; calls on the Member States to take the foregoing into account when drawing up their climate change adaptation and mitigation plans, by including specific solutions for children and young people, ensuring that the right to a safe, secure and clean environment is respected and ensuring awareness among the younger generations;

47. Stresses the right to culture, sport and leisure and to access to open spaces and a healthy environment for all children, as laid down in the UNCRC; calls on the Member States to promote appropriate extracurricular and leisure activities that enable all children, regardless of their socio-economic background and family situation, to spend their time after school and during holidays doing something physically and mentally stimulating; encourages the Member States to use available European funds to promote the equal participation of children from disadvantaged households in extracurricular and leisure activities; calls on the Member States to establish policies that empower parents to support their children outside the childcare setting throughout their childhood, particularly during early childhood;
48. Highlights the importance of a reinforced EU strategy for sport that encourages children and young people to participate in sport and physical education, regardless of their socio-economic background, and enjoyment of the outdoors regardless of their age and fitness level; stresses the central role of sport in improving children's health resilience and chronic disease prevention; reiterates that team sport is a driver of social inclusion;
49. Recommends that the Commission and the Member States develop guidelines to support the participation of children in the policy-making process, putting in place mechanisms that promote children's participation in decision-making that affects their lives, and to enable and encourage children to express informed views, ensuring that those views are reflected in the main decisions affecting them;
50. Recommends that the Commission and the Member States, in their policies for children or policies that have an impact on children, emphasise the right to play and recreational activity as a structural element of children's overall development, by putting in place infrastructure and programmes that reflect the importance of that right;

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51. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The full development of children, ensuring that they grow healthy, curious, proactive and respectful of the world they live in, is essential to ensuring a fairer, more equal and advanced future. The Member States are responsible for devising universal and structural policies that guarantee this, and the European Union can contribute, namely by redistributing funds that promote territorial and social cohesion, as well as by defining specific programmes that can contribute to comprehensive social responses.

Policies that strengthen investment in universal, public and quality education, as well as in health and social security services. Policies that encourage participation in sport and physical education, enjoyment of the great outdoors and access to culture. Policies that promote the participation of children and child and youth citizenship schemes. Policies that guarantee adequate responses to violence. Policies that ensure comfortable housing. Policies that contribute to a sustainable environment. Policies that focus on the inalienable right of children to play.

The first years of life have a decisive impact on the integral development of children, as they develop essential skills in these early years.

It is essential to ensure free day care, based on a public network, for all children under the age of three, putting an end to the discrimination engendered by the difficulties faced by many families in finding child care, which forces them to opt for precarious solutions. It is equally essential to provide free pre-school access for all children from the age of three. Education systems, at all levels, should promote a universal culture focused on the integral development of individuals.

Even in Member States where the right to health is enshrined in law, many children do not have access to adequate healthcare due to a lack of available public services. Investment is needed in universal and free public health services that guarantee children public health care in all specialties and in all circumstances.

In recent years, vaccination rates have been in decline, thereby jeopardising the main defence against serious diseases, which has contributed to the resurgence of diseases considered to have been eradicated in the EU. Campaigns should be promoted to counteract the negativity and misinformation surrounding vaccines.

Breastfeeding has enormous benefits for the healthy growth of children and for mothers. Policies are needed to promote and make breastfeeding possible from birth and for the first six months, as recommended by the WHO, including by providing for maternity leave and associated rights when women return to work.

It is necessary to strengthen public social security systems in order to guarantee the universality of family allowances and other allowances (whether or not increased by the Child Guarantee) that supplement family incomes, such as minimum wage benefits, especially in the case of families with children.

In Europe, one in five children is a victim of some form of sexual violence, and most abuse occurs within a hypothetical framework of trust, such as within families or related institutions. Children represent around a quarter of victims of trafficking in the EU, the majority of whom are girls, who are victims of sexual exploitation.

All children have the right to be protected from abuse, violence, child labour and neglect. Research shows that financial pressures within families and a lack of investment in public services put children at greater risk.

Policies are needed to address the structural problem of poverty and social exclusion. In the EU, almost 25 % of children are at risk. Children who grow up in poverty or as victims of social exclusion find it harder to succeed at school, to remain healthy and reach their full potential later in life, which perpetuates the cycle of poverty and social exclusion.

Various organisations point to so-called austerity measures (significant reduction of social support for children and families, increase in unemployment and mass use of precarious contracts, increase in taxes) as the main cause of the increase in poverty, stating that budget cuts in response to the financial crisis of 2008-2013 increased inequalities and contributed to worsening the living conditions of children, and that these factors have been exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ensuing inflation and the escalation of the war in Eastern Europe.

Child poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that stems from family poverty and therefore requires a multidimensional response, which necessarily includes increasing employment and job security, increasing wages and investing in public services.

For children to have rights, parents must also have rights. It is not only parents who have the right to accompany their children as they grow, children have a right to this too. There can be no talk of children's rights without there being talk of their parents' salaries, working hours and job stability. This could include, in particular, working towards putting an end to precarious employment contracts, deregulated working hours, poorly paid work, low wages, wage discrimination, as well as the high costs of housing, transport, childcare, education and health expenses, which account for a considerable proportion of the income of working families.

Families with disabled children and disabled parents are more likely to enter into poverty and face difficulties in entering the labour market.

Having children cannot be a choice imposed on anyone, but it does fulfil a social function that society must get behind. Any talk about the rights of parents and children must involve tackling the failure to respect maternity and paternity rights. These rights must be guaranteed during pregnancy and postpartum, when breastfeeding, when ill or in any other justifiable situation. The existing legislation in the Member States is a far from being implemented in practice, starting with companies and the workplace. There is an urgent need to respect and extend these rights, specifically by guaranteeing maternity and paternity leave with full pay for at least the first six months of a baby's life.

Children, their parents, foster families and carers must be protected from discrimination, be it on grounds of gender, colour, sexual orientation, language, religion or belief, political or other opinions, national, ethnic or social origin, membership of a national minority, wealth, birth, disability, age or any other status.

Children need time: to sleep, to socialise with family and friends, to be outdoors, to integrate into a wide range of cultural, sporting and play-related activities. Playing is essential for growth and is a right.

Children have the right to be children, to grow up healthy and happy. Their families have the right to accompany their growth.

ANNEX: LIST OF ENTITIES OR PERSONS FROM WHOM THE RAPporteur HAS RECEIVED INPUT

The following list is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur. The rapporteur has received input from the following entities or persons in the preparation of the report, until the adoption thereof in committee:

Entity and/or person
Erradicar a pobreza
Prochild colab
Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais
Associação Portuguesa de Famílias Numerosas
Laboratório de Estudos Sociais sobre o nascimento - nascer.pt
Movimento Democrático de Mulheres
ISCTE-IUL
Gabinete Desenvolvimento social da Fundação Nossa Sra do Bom Sucesso
CONFEDERAÇÃO GERAL DOS TRABALHADORES PORTUGUESES - INTERSINDICAL NACIONAL / CGTP-IN
Comissão para a Igualdade entre Mulheres e Homens
UDIPSS Lisboa - União Distrital das Instituições Particulares de Solidariedade Social de Lisboa

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on reducing inequalities and promoting social inclusion in times of crisis for children and their families
(2023/2066(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Ewa Kopacz

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Observes that crises are not gender-neutral, that social and gender inequalities across the EU have been exacerbated as a result of several consecutive crises such as the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, the war of aggression against Ukraine, climate change-related disasters and the current rise in living and energy costs, and that these have negatively affected children and their families in terms of living conditions, income and access to employment, healthcare, education and skills, housing, basic goods and services, and care and social services, thus in terms of their general well-being;
2. Takes the view that so-called austerity measures (including the significant curtailment of social support for children and families, a rise in unemployment, the mass use of precarious employment and an increase in taxes) and budget cuts in response to the 2008-2013 financial crisis widened inequalities and played a role in declining living conditions for children;
3. Highlights that the current cost-of-living crisis has acutely threatened women's livelihoods, health and well-being, putting them and their families at risk of not being able to access housing, limiting their purchasing power and ability to provide food and increasing energy poverty, social exclusion and inequalities; highlights that women and children facing intersectional discrimination experience additional barriers in accessing basic social services; stresses that special attention must be placed on tackling the effects of biases and persistent stereotypes in accessing these services and in addressing the effects of parental poverty, which leads to child poverty; stresses that investing in measures to support women also improves the living conditions of their children; notes in this context that single parents are at greater risk of crisis-driven poverty and are more likely to pass it on from generation to generation, and that 85 % of single-parent families are female-headed; calls on the Member States to support measures monitoring

the prices of energy, transport and other essential goods in order to reduce the impact of the rise in the cost of living, especially on women, children and their families;

4. Recalls that the COVID-19 pandemic has posed challenges for children, especially those in vulnerable situations, through the disruption of their daily routines and social connections and has aggravated existing gender inequalities, especially an increase in unpaid care work and work-life imbalance, and resulted in a double burden for many women, who often have longer shifts at work and additional informal care at home¹; points out that, in times of crisis, women, especially those in the labour market, are disproportionately affected by their socio-economic context, as happened during the COVID-19 crisis when 42 % of women aged 15-24, 34 % of women aged 25-39 and 27-29 % of those aged 40-54 and 55 and older were not able to undertake paid professional activity as they wished²; notes that a disproportionate share of the burden was borne by women who worked remotely, as their lives were made harder by the need to combine work, childcare and domestic chores; takes the view that the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis had an impact on unemployment rates in the Member States, particularly for women; takes the view, therefore, that it is essential to address the dimension of female poverty in the handling of this situation and the search for solutions; highlights that crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated existing inequalities including service related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) or have led to a critical situation in accessing SRHR;
5. Highlights that climate change disproportionately affects women have a more limited ability to respond to climate, natural and environmental disasters as a result of their unequal access to resources, education, job opportunities, as well as to prevailing social and cultural norms and the diverse intersectional discrimination that they face³; points out that the climate crisis and its impacts are already exacerbating these inequalities and will continue do so in the future;
6. Notes that efforts to bring about a truly equal society, including gender equality policies, often fall short in times of crisis; calls on the Member States to prioritise policies and investments that counteract the negative effects of such crises on children, women and their families, including those that ensure access to high-quality care, education, health or housing services and protect victims of gender-based violence; stresses the importance of a systematic gender perspective for analysing these problems and their differing impacts and for finding holistic and fair solutions; notes the socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing increase in all forms of violence towards women, as documented in various reports from several Member States during and after the COVID-19 lockdown that revealed a worrying increase in domestic and gender-based violence, including physical, psychological and cyber-violence; points out that children are also affected and at risk; points out the risks of being victims of violence for some vulnerable categories, such as women asylum seekers and the LGBTQIA+ community; stresses the need to step up all resources, both public and

¹ European Parliament resolution of 5 July 2022 towards a common European action on care (OJ C 47, 7.2.2023, p. 30).

² Public Opinion Monitoring Unit of the European Parliament, 'Flash Eurobarometer 2022 – Women in times of Covid-19', March 2022.

³ European Parliament resolution of 17 February 2022 on the EU priorities for the 66th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (OJ C 342, 6.9.2022, p. 276).

private, in order to tackle situations posing a risk to children, young people, the elderly, people with disabilities and support groups at risk of poverty; calls for the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) to be strengthened to prioritise the fight against poverty and social exclusion; stresses the need for increased funding for actions aimed at preventing and combating gender-based violence under the Daphne strand within the citizens, equality, rights and values programme;

7. Notes that, in order to reduce these inequalities and promote social inclusion, it is crucial to eradicate all forms of discrimination, ensure long-term policies and services that promote access to decent jobs and fair wages, eradicate the pay and pension gap, protect against the multiple causes of poverty and social exclusion, facilitate equal opportunities for parents to return to work and promote work-life balance measures, including equal access for all to affordable and high-quality childcare and long-term care facilities and the equal sharing of care, domestic and childcare responsibilities between parents within families; points out that early childhood education, as a component of high-quality and professional childcare, not only enables parents to work, but also benefits a child's social and psychological development; calls on the Member States to strive to achieve universal health coverage, as defined by the WHO, and to provide pre- and post-natal care for all women;
8. Recalls the importance of equally sharing care responsibilities at home, as this allows women with caring duties to be better represented in the labour market and to improve their living conditions and social inclusion; observes that gender stereotypes and norms related to the division of care responsibilities not only discourage men from fully participating in parenthood, and in caregiving in a wider sense, but are also harmful for women and their well-being and are disadvantageous for their career growth⁴; notes that those with care responsibilities should also have the right to request flexible working time arrangements at work, such as a reduction of working hours, flexi-time and telework; stresses that measures to achieve proper work-life balance are important in ensuring that caregiving responsibilities are equally divided between women and men and in addressing income and employment disparities; notes that achieving work-life balance depends on the availability and accessibility of high-quality care services;
9. Recalls that, in the EU 27 in 2021, 27.9 % of women aged 25-49 outside the labour force indicated that looking after children or adults in need of care was their main reason for not seeking employment⁵; points out that a rise in women's employment will also contribute to addressing the challenges stemming from the EU's ageing population and to improving the Member States' economic stability; recalls that gender imbalances in care and employment can result in a gender gap in pensions and high differences in poverty rates in older age; notes that families with children are more impacted by a lack of access to the labour market and by income inequalities; notes that, while the percentage difference in the employment rate of men and women without children stands at 1 %, for those who have a child younger than six, the rate stands at 21 % and climbs to 37 % for those with three children⁶; takes the view that single-parent families,

⁴ European Commission, '[Women's situation in the labour market](#)', accessed 2 October 2023.

⁵ Eurostat, database table LFSA_IGAR, 'Inactive population not seeking employment by sex, age and main reason – Care of adults with disabilities or children and other family or personal reasons – from 15 to 64 years old', last updated 14 September 2023.

⁶ Eurofound, 'Living and working in Europe 2021', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg,

especially families headed by single mothers, are at greater risk of poverty or social exclusion (42.1 % compared to 29.6 % in family units with two adults and three or more children), which is related to the feminisation of poverty, women's over-representation in precarious and part-time work, the disproportionate time women spend in low-paid work, interruptions in women's careers to care for children or other family members, and the pay gap between men and women⁷; stresses, as outlined in the work-life balance legislation under the European Pillar of Social Rights, the importance of the proposal for additional measures for protection against discrimination and dismissal for parents and care-givers; encourages gender-balanced use of family-related leaves and flexible working arrangements;

10. Calls on the Member States to establish a comprehensive set of rules banning the persistent practice of asking women in job interviews about the possibility of them falling pregnant or about whether they are pregnant at the time they apply for the job; underlines that it is a form of workplace harassment and rejects the pressure it puts on working mothers;
11. Highlights women's major contributions in the fields of employment, culture, education, science and research; recognises the profound deterioration in the living conditions of women employed in the arts and culture and in micro and small agricultural and rural businesses, as a result of a lack of investment in and support to economic and cultural activities;
12. Takes the view that women are at greater risk of poverty than men and that tackling women's poverty is not only important for its own sake, but also because of its vital importance in efforts to reduce child poverty; recalls that period poverty, which refers to limited access to sanitary products, affects about 1 in 10 women in Europe; stresses that shame, untreated menstrual pain and discriminatory traditions lead to school drop outs and lower attendance rates for girls at school and women at work; underlines that understanding the links between menstrual hygiene and maternal morbidity, mortality and infertility, STI/HIV and cervical cancer is key to ending health inequalities and can support early detection and save lives; notes that, in 2021, 24.4 % of children (under the age of 18) in the EU (19.8 million) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion; notes that this figure exceeds 30 % in some countries; takes the view that children who grow up in poverty find it harder to succeed at school, remain healthy and reach their full potential later in life; notes that social investment in individual abilities during children's early years is particularly beneficial for children from disadvantaged backgrounds; takes the view that, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which all the EU Member States are signatories, all children must be given the right to education, healthcare services, housing and protection, leisure and free time and a balanced diet, as well as the right to take part in decisions that affect them and to receive care in a family environment;
13. Welcomes the EU care strategy and the revision of the Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care as key drivers of women's labour-market participation; points out the importance of such high-quality early childhood education and care for

9 May 2022, p. 73.

⁷ Eurostat, '[1 in 4 children in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion](#)', 28 October 2021.

fighting inequalities and social disadvantages for children and their families⁸; calls for a set of policies, programmes and recommendations, as well as investment at European level, to recognise care as a right and the backbone of our society; stresses that all of these should take an integrated, holistic and life-long approach to care, increase the attractiveness of work in the care sector for women and men alike and tackle discrimination and gender inequalities in the sector; stresses, however, that the existing quality and amount of long-term care and childcare is insufficient, especially for early childhood;

14. Recalls the importance of the Barcelona targets for 2030, which include as targets that at least 50 % of children below the age of three and at least 96 % of children between the age of three and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education and care; stresses the central role of women in essential areas of the public domain, such as social welfare, care, education and health, all of which hold the economy and society together, but are often the first to be subjected to cuts in a crisis; takes the view that early childhood education and care have a decisive impact on the cognitive development of children, given that they develop essential abilities in their first five years of life and that access to high-quality education lays the foundations for later success in life in terms of education, well-being, employability and social integration, and has a significant impact on self-esteem; takes the view that childcare and pre-school education play a significant role in compensating for the socio-economic status of children at risk of poverty and foster the integration of parents, especially mothers, into the labour market; takes the view that an inclusive education addresses all pupils by bolstering learning and cultural and community values; notes that educational differences among children from various educational backgrounds have grown; recommends that the Member States guarantee all children universal access to inclusive and high-quality education, whether formal or informal and whether public or private, at all ages, in order to foster their emotional, social, cognitive and physical development, safeguard their well-being, and ensure that all children can benefit from inclusive high-quality education and thus maximise the education system's impact when it comes to pushing for equal opportunities and breaking exclusion cycles;
15. Recommends that the Member States provide the necessary support to ensure the right to culture, sport and leisure and access to open space and a healthy environment for all children, with a focus on ensuring equal access and quality for children in poverty, children in remote areas, children with disabilities, children belonging to national, ethnic, religious, linguistic and migrant minorities, children moving within the EU regardless of their nationality and children left behind; recalls the right to free time and to take part in games and recreational activities, as laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
16. Stresses that addressing gender pay and pension gaps has a positive impact on poverty reduction and social inclusion and is essential in achieving gender equality; stresses that widely available, high-quality childcare, social care and household services are crucial, as their absence or limited accessibility results in women reducing or abandoning their participation in the employment market to fulfil unpaid care duties; calls for an

⁸ In 2021 in the EU-27, 27.9 % of women aged 25–49 outside the labour force indicated that looking after children or adults in need of care was their main reason for not seeking employment (Eurostat 2021 Labour Force Survey).

ambitious implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive⁹ and for specific measures to fight against precarious jobs, in-work poverty, the horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market and the undervaluation of work mostly done by women, which should be reassessed and remunerated fairly;

17. Notes the important role of families in crisis situations; points out the importance of adequate childcare, social care and household services for single parents, in particular women, as single mothers were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and are vulnerable to the care needs of their relatives, which make them less available for professional activities¹⁰; calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement and strengthen the Child Guarantee in an ambitious manner to ensure that all children in the EU, including those in remote areas, have access to healthy nutrition, adequate housing, healthcare, education, care and leisure activities; recalls the importance of mainstreaming children's rights in all internal and external EU policies, actions and programmes, both legislative and non-legislative, that may affect children directly or indirectly, ensuring consistency and coherence; stresses the importance of implementing the Child Guarantee Recommendation¹¹;
18. Stresses that, in Europe, one in five children is a victim of some form of sexual violence, that most abuse occurs within a hypothetical framework of trust and that children represent around a quarter of victims of trafficking, the majority of whom are girls and who largely become victims of sexual exploitation¹²; notes that young female asylum seekers face gender-based violence; condemns all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect with regard to children; urges the Member States to develop and apply integrated prevention and child protection systems with a view to doing away with violence, abuse, exploitation and negligence, with the involvement of schools and health systems, including public services, to create rapid response conditions, provide a protective environment and help to empower children; stresses that all children have the right to be protected from abuse, violence and neglect;
19. Points out the importance of education and empowerment for girls and women as a factor in reducing gender inequalities and social exclusion; stresses, in this regard, the importance of school programmes that take a critical look at stereotypes and their negative impact on girls and women, but also on boys and men, with the aim of breaking them down; recommends that the Member States ensure that all children have access to inclusive, quality education at all ages, whether formal or informal; emphasises that comprehensive sexuality education for all children is an essential measure in ending inequalities and working towards a violence-free society, as it challenges harmful gender stereotypes and promotes diversity, bodily autonomy and physical and mental integrity;

⁹ Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (OJ L 132, 17.5.2023, p. 21).

¹⁰ Eurofound, 'Economic and social inequalities in Europe in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 24 January 2023.

¹¹ Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee (OJ L 223, 22.6.2021, p. 14).

¹² Commission communication of 24 March 2021 on the EU strategy on the rights of the child (COM(2021)0142).

20. Recognises the vital role of schools as providers of a daily nutritious meal (in many cases, the only meal) and promoters of nutritional education that goes beyond their walls; urges the Member States to ensure at least one good-quality, free meal at all levels of compulsory education;
21. Considers it imperative that the Member States develop policies that address the prevalence of child labour in the EU; stresses, in this sense, the recommendations of the International Labour Organization highlighting the need to enlarge social protection for children and their families in order to mitigate the poverty and uncertainty that perpetuate child labour; ensuring that the birth of every child is registered so that children have a legal identity and can enjoy their rights from birth; promoting decent work that provides a fair wage, with a special focus on workers in the informal economy; promoting adequate rural ways of life, including by supporting economic diversification, investing in infrastructure and services and expanding the protection and planning of crops, particularly in family farming, which partly continues to depend on the whole household to take care of agricultural processes; ensuring there is legislation that protects children, supported by the state instruments required for its application; and addressing issues of gender and discrimination that increase the risk of child labour, particularly for girls, related to unpaid domestic work;
22. Notes that children with various backgrounds, such as migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented and unaccompanied children, are among the hardest hit by poverty; notes that children living in single-parent families or large disadvantaged families, children with disabilities and children belonging to ethnic minorities are also at risk of poverty¹³; highlights that there are disparities in access to health and education for the poorest and most vulnerable children; stresses that Roma children and an estimated 11 million children with disabilities are among the most disadvantaged when it comes to access to quality education; notes that, while Roma children in Europe are more likely to drop out of school at either primary or secondary level without having acquired foundational skills, children with disabilities remain excluded from school and high-quality learning altogether¹⁴; stresses that, according to the Global Women's Health Index, in the EU in the past 12 months, about 44 % of all women have not been tested for any of the four critical diseases for women; notes that gender inequality inhibits women and girls from accessing health information and critical services; stresses the importance of reducing healthcare disparities for women; calls on the Commission and the Member States to prioritise the rights of children in the national Roma strategies and ensure that Roma children have equal access to essential services, with a particular focus on early childhood education and care, primary and secondary education, healthcare, nutrition and decent housing; observes that, for girls who face multiple forms of discrimination, the barriers to accessing their rights and overcoming poverty are even more complex; notes that, because of this, it is likely that they will be overlooked in plans to address the needs of vulnerable groups; highlights the importance of investments in both private and public education that ensure targeted teaching methods and an individualised approach for children belonging to more vulnerable social groups, such as families and communities subject to exclusion; stresses that this

¹³ Save the Children, '[Over 200,000 more children are at risk of poverty in the European Union: Save the Children report](#)', 7 March 2023.

¹⁴ UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, '[Situation of Children in Europe and Central Asia](#)', January 2023.

approach should include collaboration between teachers, social and educational specialists, the families and the communities; calls on the Commission and the Member States to mainstream children's rights in the 2020-2030 European disability strategy and to support families, by investing in children's and their families' empowerment and right to independent living;

23. Recalls that nine million adolescents in Europe (aged 10 to 19) are living with mental disorders, with anxiety and depression accounting for more than half of all cases; stresses that mental distress is more pronounced for women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, due to discrimination and marginalisation¹⁵; stresses additionally that there is also a high prevalence of mental health disorders among unaccompanied children and adolescent migrants, as the circumstances that these children face have a significant impact on mental health; observes that COVID-19 restrictions severely limited children's social opportunities and interactions, causing widespread disruption and an increase in depression symptoms, especially for adolescent girls¹⁶; notes that schools facilitate access to mental health and psychosocial support; recalls that UNICEF has highlighted proven strategies, such as implementing programmes to build awareness and strengthen emotional coping skills for adolescents, integrating mental health counselling services into education, training teachers and staff in how to strengthen the well-being of students, and creating safe spaces for children to discuss and share their concerns¹⁷; stresses that the Member States need to allocate adequate funding to treat mental health and psychosocial problems and improve regional infrastructure through the ESF+ programme and the European Regional Development Fund, including targeted programmes for vulnerable groups;
24. Notes that inequalities in health among women are strongly related to socio-economic status and geographic region and that taking into account the social and economic factors that shape women's lives and health at different stages of life is crucial; points out that there is a lack of high-quality, accessible, available and affordable care services in all Member States, including in rural areas; points out that, due to a wide range of legal, financial, practical, social and cultural barriers and restrictions, SRHR, including safe and legal abortion, vary widely within and between EU Member States; recalls that SRHR is a precondition for gender equality;
25. Recalls that many Ukrainian women refugees fleeing the war of aggression live in different EU and non-EU countries in Europe and have specific needs related to childcare that must be addressed in order to not only facilitate their access to the job market, but also to facilitate language learning and the social inclusion of their children; highlights that the war in Ukraine weakened access to healthcare, including SRHR services, and led to a critical situation in meeting the SRHR needs of those displaced;
26. Calls on the Member States to address the challenges that Ukrainian women refugees face, such as language barriers, a greater likelihood of social isolation and limited social networks; notes that Ukrainian refugees may be at further risk of poverty and social exclusion; notes that care obligations are a barrier to employment for Ukrainian women

¹⁵ UNICEF, '[The Mental Health Burden Affecting Europe's Children](#)', 4 October 2021.

¹⁶ Save the Children, 'Guaranteeing Children's Future: How COVID-19, cost-of-living and climate crises affect children in poverty and what governments in Europe need to do', March 2023.

¹⁷ UNICEF, '[The Mental Health Burden Affecting Europe's Children](#)', 4 October 2021.

(33 %) compared to Ukrainian men (9 %); calls on the Member States to address these challenges by offering dedicated support for childcare, such as childcare support or subsidies¹⁸;

27. Stresses that, according to a report by Save the Children¹⁹, more children are living in areas affected by armed conflicts than at any other time in the last two decades (especially in Afghanistan, Yemen, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria and Somalia), with 100 000 babies dying every year as a result of conflicts; recalls that 420 million children were living in areas affected by conflicts in 2017 (18 % of all the children in the world), which was 30 million more than in the previous year;
28. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to combat structural discrimination and make it possible for everyone to have unrestricted and non-discriminatory access to the labour market, which also improves children's development, strengthens social inclusion and fairness and reduces poverty; calls on the Commission and the Member States to put forward specific measures to promote access to jobs and security for refugees and migrants; highlights, in this regard, the European Pay Transparency and Minimum Wage Directives²⁰, which are further measures that aim to eliminate the gender pay gap; points out that fair remuneration helps tackle women's poverty in a sustainable way; stresses that EU financing enables support and investment at national level to combat child poverty and promote social inclusion;
29. Calls on the Commission to put forward a set of measures and recommendations aimed at fostering a transition towards an economy that puts care at the centre of EU and national policies with timely and equal access to quality care services, such as care education, while making efficient use of the available EU tools and dedicating adequate funds to this area; reiterates that, in addition to the ESF+, other EU financing sources can be directly or indirectly used to finance programmes that have an impact on the lives of children and their families, such as the European Regional Development Fund and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived;
30. Asks the Commission and the Member States to establish a system to monitor breastfeeding at EU level in order to understand the reality and help formulate policies promoting breastfeeding, in line with WHO recommendations;
31. Calls for gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting principles to be reflected in all policy areas, as well when designing measures to respond to specific crises affecting women and girls; stresses the need therefore to specifically collect disaggregated data and develop gender expertise and gender impact assessments to ensure that the gender dimension is fully integrated and to better understand and address the specific effects of these policies on women; calls for gender-targeted measures through earmarking to address the specific needs of women following the negative impacts of the multiple crises, especially in the fields of employment, gender-based violence and SRHR,

¹⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, '[What are the integration challenges of Ukrainian refugee women?](#)', 30 May 2023.

¹⁹ Save the Children, 'Stop the War on Children: Protecting children in 21st century conflict', 2019.

²⁰ Directive (EU) 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union (OJ L 275, 25.10.2022, p. 33).

including where relevant, in programmes and instruments within NextGenerationEU and the EU long-term budget for the 2021-2027 period.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	19.9.2023
Result of final vote	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 10px;">+:</div> <div>24</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 10px;">-:</div> <div>2</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 10px;">0:</div> <div>4</div> </div>
Members present for the final vote	Isabella Adinolfi, Christine Anderson, Robert Biedroń, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Annika Bruna, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Livia Járóka, Arba Kokalari, Alice Kuhnke, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Karen Melchior, Johan Nissinen, Maria Noichl, Carina Ohlsson, Pina Picierno, Evelyn Regner, Diana Riba i Giner, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Maria Veronica Rossi, Christine Schneider, Sylwia Spurek
Substitutes present for the final vote	Abir Al-Sahlani, Silvia Modig, Eleni Stavrou, Hilde Vautmans
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Laura Ballarín Cereza

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

24	+
ID	Annika Bruna
PPE	Isabella Adinolfi, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Christine Schneider, Eleni Stavrou
Renew	Abir Al-Sahlan, Karen Melchior, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Hilde Vautmans
S&D	Laura Ballarín Cereza, Robert Biedroń, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Maria Noichl, Carina Ohlsson, Pina Picierno, Evelyn Regner
The Left	Silvia Modig, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop
Verts/ALE	Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Alice Kuhnke, Diana Riba i Giner, Sylwia Spurek

2	-
ECR	Johan Nissinen
ID	Christine Anderson

4	0
ECR	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión
ID	Maria Veronica Rossi
NI	Livia Járóka
PPE	Arba Kokalari

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	7.11.2023
Result of final vote	+: 33 -: 5 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	João Albuquerque, Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Dominique Bilde, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Milan Brglez, Jordi Cañas, Leila Chaibi, Ilan De Basso, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, Jarosław Duda, Estrella Durá Ferrandis, Cindy Franssen, Chiara Gemma, Helmut Geuking, Alicia Homs Ginel, Irena Joveva, Ádám Kósa, Stelios Kypourouopoulos, Katrin Langensiepen, Sara Matthieu, Max Orville, Sandra Pereira, Dragoş Pişlaru, Elżbieta Rafalska, Daniela Rondinelli, Pirkko Ruohonen-Lerner, Mounir Satouri, Monica Semedo, Eugen Tomac, Romana Tomc, Marianne Vind, Tomáš Zdechovský
Substitutes present for the final vote	Gheorghe Falcă, Romeo Franz, Lukas Mandl, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, Birgit Sippel
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Asim Ademov, Attila Ara-Kovács, João Pimenta Lopes, Thijs Reuten

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

33	+
PPE	Asim Ademov, Jarosław Duda, Gheorghe Falcă, Cindy Franssen, Helmut Geuking, Stelios Kypouropoulos, Lukas Mandl, Eugen Tomac
Renew	Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Jordi Cañas, Irena Joveva, Max Orville, Dragoș Pîslaru, Monica Semedo
S&D	João Albuquerque, Attila Ara-Kovács, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Milan Brglez, Ilan De Basso, Estrella Durá Ferrandis, Alicia Homs Ginel, Thijs Reuten, Daniela Rondinelli, Birgit Sippel, Marianne Vind
The Left	Leila Chaibi, Sandra Pereira, João Pimenta Lopes, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop
Verts/ALE	Romeo Franz, Katrin Langensiepen, Sara Matthieu, Mounir Satouri

5	-
ECR	Chiara Gemma, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, Elżbieta Rafalska, Pirkko Ruohonen-Lerner
PPE	Romana Tomc

3	0
ID	Dominique Bilde
NI	Ádám Kósa
PPE	Tomáš Zdechovský

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention