



# Recent developments in children-related policies

**"Rete Fiocchi in Ospedale"**

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## Context: main trends in child poverty

- Since 2010 child AROPE went slight down (27.5 to 26.9 %) but figures remain worrying
- Poverty is highest for children of lone parents, migrant/refugee children, Roma children, and children in large families
- Jobless parents are the main reason families and children poverty
- Clear disincentives to work for lone parents and second earners on low income, due to:
  - cost of childcare
  - articulation with benefits
- Significant social gradient registered for those children under 3 attending ECEC services

# Main policy instruments in this context

- Commission Communication on "A EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child" (COM(2011)60 of 15.02.2017)
- Commission Recommendation of 20.02.2013 on "Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage" (2013/112/EU)
- Commission Staff Working Document on "Taking stock of the 2013 Recommendation on Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage" (SWD(2017)258 of 26.04.2016)
- Communication from the Commission "Establishing European Pillar of Social Rights" (COM(2017)250 + SWD(2017)201 of 26.04.2017)
- Work-life balance initiative (Communication + proposal for a Directive) of 26.04.2017

## 2013 Investing in Children Recommendation

- Follows on UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Resolution 44/25 of 20.11.1989)
- Part of the 2013 Social Investment Package (SIP)
- Pleads for a children rights-based, integrated and comprehensive approach towards children policies
- Promotes the idea of "progressive universalism": balance between universal and targeted policies
- Provides policy guidance and related indicators to help EU+MS focus on successful social investment for children
- It is structured around three main pillars:
  1. Access to resources
  2. Access to quality services
  3. Social and legal child participation

## 2013 IiC Recommendation – 1st pillar

- Support parents access to sufficient resources in the form of :
  - adequately paid work (tackle in-work poverty)
  - adequate income support, through:
    - tax reliefs or credits
    - family and child benefits
    - housing benefits
    - minimum income schemes

## 2013 IiC Recommendation – 2nd pillar

- Access to affordable, quality services:
  - day-care
  - health
  - housing
- Particular relevance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services
- Importance of the 2002 Barcelona targets
- Development of parenting support services in order to foster deinstitutionalization

## 2013 IiC Recommendation – 3rd pillar

- Child participation in extracurricular activities:
  - sports
  - social clubs
  - cultural programmes
- Avoid "pay to play" practices
- Right to be heard: involvement of children in social services and legal decisions (i.e., divorce) affecting them

# Means to support the implementation

- Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC):
  - improvement of EU indicators
  - exchanges of best practices through the EPIC website
  - organisation of national seminars
  - 2014 study on conditional cash transfers
- European Semester:
  - Country Reports
  - Country Specific Recommendations (CSR)
- Funding

# ESIF funding for the period 2014-2020

- ESF: 21.2 billion euro earmarked for social inclusion measures, of which:
  - 3.9 billion euro for access to services, including childcare
  - 8 billion euro for measures to prevent early school leaving
- ERDF: 11 billion euro planned for measures promoting social inclusion and 6 billion euro planned for investment in educational infrastructure
- Clearer link between funding priorities and Europe 2020 / European Semester CSRs
- *Ex ante conditionalities*: Roma inclusion, active inclusion, early school leaving
- New emphasis on partnership with NGO stakeholders (Code of Conduct gives NGOs a seat in the Monitoring Committees)

# 2017 Staff Working Document

- Stock-taking, backwards-looking document, which doesn't announce new actions / initiatives
- Focuses on implementation from 2013 to date: areas in which good progress was made and others where there is room for improvement
- Should provide useful guidance for further action at EU, national, regional and/or local level in this field

# Main findings of the 2017 SWD

- Main risk factors for child poverty have remained fairly stable (exception: migration)
- Recommendation is still neither well-known nor properly used within the MS
- Great variety in trends and performances among MS
- The first two pillars of the Recommendation have been the most successful, but disappointing progress towards Barcelona targets
- The third pillar was much less successful – need for urgent improvement
- Impact at EU level: European Semester + funding

# European Pillar of Social Rights

- Framework for social upwards convergence towards better working and living conditions
- It builds on the current *acquis*, modernising and updating it without creating new rights
- It doesn't change the Treaty distribution of competences in the employment and social policy fields
- Initially conceived for Eurozone MS but open to all those that want to participate of this vision

# Children within the Pillar's structure

- Chapter I.- Equal opportunities and access to the labour market
- Chapter II.- Fair working conditions
- Chapter III.- Social protection and inclusion
  - Principle 11. Childcare and support to children
    - a. Children have the right to affordable ECEC of good quality.
    - b. Children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.

# Implementation of Principle 11

- Centre of gravity remain with the MS (national, regional or local level) and role of social partners is preserved
- Support action at EU level:
  - European Semester process, now supported by the Social Pillar Scoreboard
  - Support for high quality and affordable ECEC
  - Exchange of good practices through the EPIC platform
  - Financial support through various funding instruments (mainly ESIF)
  - PA on a child guarantee

# Work-life balance Initiative

- Address obstacles to female labour market participation through:
  - better reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities
  - more equitable use of work-life balance arrangements between women and men
- Mix of policy measures in 3 different areas:
  1. Gender-balanced leaves and flexible working arrangements
  2. Improving quality, affordability and access to care
  3. Addressing economic disincentives
- A legislative proposal, encompassing:
  - paternity leave
  - parental leave
  - carers' leave
  - flexible working arrangements



**Thank you for your attention.**

**Any questions?**