



Council of the
European Union

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SOC 745

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: ST 12847/20

Subject: Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 20/2020: "Combating child poverty - Better targeting of Commission support required"

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 20/2020: "Combating child poverty - Better targeting of Commission support required", approved by written procedure on 23 November 2020.

European Court of Auditors' Special Report 'Combating child poverty – Better targeting of Commission support required'

Council Conclusions

1. HAVING RECEIVED an informative Special Report by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) titled 'Combating child poverty – Better targeting of Commission support required'¹;
2. RECOGNISING that combating child poverty remains a serious and pressing issue, with the most recent EUROSTAT data from 2019 showing that almost one out of four children continues to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion and that children are at a greater risk of poverty or social exclusion than the rest of the population within the EU²;
ACKNOWLEDGING that the ECA Special Report does not make any statements on a possible COVID-related development of the situation;
3. NOTING that while the fight against child poverty falls primarily within the Member State's competence, the Commission plays a pivotal role in supporting Member States' efforts to alleviate child poverty, and that the ECA focused in its report on the latter;
4. RECALLING principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights mentioning children's rights to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality as well as the right to protection from poverty;
5. ACKNOWLEDGING in this context the efforts undertaken by the Commission with its Recommendation of 20 February 2013 'Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage' and in the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights;

¹ https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR20_20/SR_child_poverty_EN.pdf

² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#Children_growing_up_in_poverty_and_social_exclusion

6. TAKING NOTE that the ECA invites the Commission to take into account in the design and future implementation of its upcoming European Child Guarantee policy initiative the findings and recommendations of the ECA Special Report;
7. RECOGNISING the potential of the EU funds, especially the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), in addressing the issue of child poverty, where relevant;
8. NOTING the four concluding recommendations by the ECA:
 - (1) The Commission should include actions and objectives to tackle child poverty in its action plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights;
 - (2) The Commission should have clear internal guidance for identifying situations that could lead to a potential country-specific recommendation (CSR) directly relating to child poverty as part of their analysis within the European Semester process;
 - (3) The Commission should ensure that 2021-2027 Partnership Agreements (PAs) and Programmes provide adequate consideration of child poverty. In particular, the Commission should ensure that where funding is earmarked for tackling child poverty directly, that this is clearly reflected in the intervention logic of the PAs and Programmes;
 - (4) The Commission should ensure that sufficient and reliable information on the measures and funding required to have a positive impact on the level of child poverty in the EU has been collated and analysed for developing a European Child Guarantee;
9. TAKING NOTE that the ECA's recommendation concerning the European Semester Process was made prior to the Commission's announcement made in the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021³ that there will be no need to propose CSRs in 2021 to those Member States that will have submitted their national recovery and resilience plans, however, that reform implementation will continue to be monitored based on previous years' CSRs;

³ See doc. 10887/20.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

10. CALLS on the Commission, in light of the recommendations of the Special Report, to include actions and objectives to tackle child poverty in its future initiatives, inter alia in the framework of the European Semester;
11. Further, CALLS on the Commission to ensure the completion of the necessary steps and information gathering for the preparation of the upcoming European Child Guarantee policy initiative;
12. CALLS on the Commission to continue supporting mutual learning and exchange of best practice among Member States, including through the SPC, and to provide, where relevant, guidance on how to establish a link with the ESI Funds;
13. CALLS on the Social Protection Committee (SPC) to continue – in the framework of its Treaty-based task of monitoring the social situation and the development of social protection policies in the Member States and the Union – its work on poverty and on the "at risk of poverty or social exclusion" (AROPE) indicators and, whenever relevant, the new "child-specific material deprivation indicator".