



EU Alliance for
**investing
in children**

Advocacy Toolkit

for implementing the EC Recommendation
Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage

EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY & STRUCTURAL FUNDS



DECEMBER 2014

CONTENT

1. Why this toolkit?	04
2. The EC Recommendation Investing in Children	06
3. Europe 2020	07
3.1. How is it relevant for tackling child poverty?	07
3.2. Implementing Europe 2020 strategy, the European Semester	08
3.3. Opportunities for influencing Europe 2020	09
4. Structural Funds	14
4.1. How is it relevant for tackling child poverty?	14
4.2. Brief overview the European Structural and Investment Funds	16
4.3. Opportunities for influencing the European Structural and Investment Funds	19
5. Key contacts	22
6. Glossary	24
7. Bibliography	29
Annexes	30
1. Building an alliance & advocacy planner	30
2. Data collection template	32
3. Template advocacy strategy	33

1. WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

This toolkit was prepared by the EU Alliance for Investing in Children to support the advocacy work of networks and organisations on tackling and preventing child poverty and promoting child well-being at national and sub-national level. Our aim is to capitalise fully on opportunities coming from European Union level, through direct advocacy actions on child poverty and child well-being supporting national level implementation.

The European Commission's Recommendation "Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage" (hereinafter the EC Recommendation) was launched in February 2013. Although the EC Recommendation is a non-binding act, it is a key document that promotes a comprehensive policy approach to child poverty and well-being, based on three pillars: 1) access to adequate resources and reconciling work and family life; 2) access to good quality services; and 3) children's participation in decisions that affects them, and in cultural, leisure and sport activities. Applying a rights-based approach is one of its horizontal principles guiding Member States:

"Address child poverty and social exclusion from a children's rights approach, in particular by referring to the relevant provisions of the Treaty on the European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, making sure that these rights are respected, protected and fulfilled."

This toolkit aims to support national advocacy strategies to implement the EC Recommendation, including supporting the development of national alliances on investing in children. We believe effective implementation stems from working together – both between the different government departments and among stakeholders. We hope that by strengthening the joint work the implementation of the EC Recommendation will be more effective.

EU Alliance Partners aim to strengthen members' national influence by increasing knowledge of EU tools and advocacy capacity. The departure point is the existing EU guidance for governments' comprehensive policies to tackle child poverty and promote child well-being in the EC Recommendation. We chose to highlight Europe 2020 mechanisms and the programming of Structural and Investment Funds as they are critical European entry points to influence national decision-making processes and ensure that child poverty is high on Member States' policy agendas.

In particular the toolkit aims:

1. **To provide a better understanding** of the main characteristics of Europe 2020, the European Semester; and the Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 for investing in children.
2. **Provide tips** for making the best use of the new Europe 2020 Strategy and the Structural and Investment Funds in the new programming period
3. **Encourage** networks and organisations at national, regional and local level to link their advocacy work to EU opportunities

This does not exclude the need for other influencing activities, or public awareness-raising campaigns around child poverty issues. Indeed to create a favourable environment for effective policy change to happen it is necessary to change public perceptions and reduce the stigma associated with child poverty.

This document is particularly directed at national members of the EU Alliance partners and current/future national alliances, but can be equally useful for actors working or campaigning in the field of children's rights, social inclusion and social protection, or those who are involved / seeking opportunities to get involved in the Structural Funds' process.

We must also add that one size does not fit all and national organisations and alliances will adapt advocacy objectives to their own national contexts. It requires the design of advocacy strategies, to be carried out at national and sub-national levels – which should be reinforced by coordinated actions at EU level. Annexes of this strategy offer templates for taking the first steps in designing an advocacy strategy.

2. THE EC RECOMMENDATION INVESTING IN CHILDREN

“Preventing the transmission of disadvantage across generations is a crucial investment in Europe’s future, as well as a direct contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, with long-term benefits for children, the economy and society as a whole”

“Early intervention and prevention are essential for developing more effective and efficient policies, as public expenditure addressing the consequences of child poverty and social exclusion tends to be greater than that needed for intervening at an early age”

European Commission Recommendation Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage, recital (3) and (4)

Child poverty is widely recognised to be a major drain on resources and waste of human potential. Yet investment does not necessarily follow, and most countries are cutting spending as a response to the crisis. The EU policy framework can help to highlight these gaps and the risk they pose to the lives of millions of children. Withdrawing investment in children and families has to come to an end as it stores up problems for the future. By contrast, breaking the cycle in childhood means Europe can achieve an overall reduction in poverty in society by preventing a new, upcoming generation of poor and disadvantaged.

The European Commission Recommendation provides helpful guidance to Member States on how to tackle child poverty and promote children’s well-being. It sets up a common European framework, based on the recognition of children as rights-holders. The best interests of the child, equal opportunities and support for the most disadvantaged, whilst ensuring quality universal provisions for all, are at the centre of efforts to combat child poverty. It acknowledges that investment in children is an investment in society as a whole and is essential to break the cycle of poverty and social exclusion. However, the Recommendation can only be implemented if actions are taken at national level.

The Recommendation calls for a children’s rights approach and integrated strategies based on three pillars:

- access to adequate resources – which includes supporting parents’ participation in the labour market and providing for adequate living standards through a combination of benefits;
- access to affordable quality services - which includes investing in early childhood education and care; and the education system; improving the responsiveness of health systems to address the needs of disadvantaged children; providing children with a safe, adequate housing and living environment; enhancing family support and the quality of alternative care settings;
- children’s right to participate – which includes the participation of all children in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities and in decision-making that affect their lives

The Recommendation was launched as part of the Social Investment Package in 2013 by the European Commission. The Package was endorsed the same year by Ministers. The Recommendation is the strongest non-binding document in the Social Investment Package, which has weight despite the EU’s lack of legal competence in social policies. Furthermore, the Social Investment Package is to a large extent defining the parameters of current EU policy coordination on employment and social affairs.

3. EUROPE 2020

“Firmly place child poverty and social exclusion as key issues in the Europe 2020 Strategy and National Reform Programmes, as part of the overall effort to reduce poverty and social exclusion, taking into account relevant Country Specific Recommendations adopted by the European Council”

European Commission Recommendation Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage, Guideline 4.

3.1 How is Europe 2020 relevant for tackling child poverty?

- It is the main overarching strategy driving EU economic, employment and social policy.
- It has a target to reduce poverty by at least 20 million by 2020, of which child poverty is a major priority.
- Stakeholders, including NGOs and multi-level government are expected to be key actors in the development, delivery and evaluation of the National Reform Programmes.
- The EC Recommendation Investing in Children will be implemented through Europe 2020.
- Through the National Reform Programmes there is potential to influence national anti-poverty strategies and concrete policy measures on child poverty
- The Country-Specific Recommendations can put pressure on national governments to take decisive action, based on the EU monitoring process.
- It can help to ensure more EU money for child poverty initiatives, with Europe 2020 and the priority of 20% of ESF for inclusion and poverty reduction as key criteria driving EU funding priorities through Cohesion Policy and other Funds.

What is the Strategy?

The **Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth was launched in 2010**, as a successor to the previous ten-year Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs. It contains the EU priorities for the next ten years outlining steps towards a more competitive, resource efficient and greener economy based on knowledge and innovation and a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

The strategy defines five objectives with headline targets to be attained by 2020:

1. **Employment:** raise the employment rate to 75% for the population aged 20-64.
2. **Innovation:** raise investment levels in the R&D sector to 3% GDP.
3. **Environment:** reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels; increase the share of renewables in final energy consumption to 20%; and move towards a 20% increase in energy efficiency.
4. **Education:** reduce school drop-out rates to less than 10% and increase the share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%.
5. **Promoting social inclusion:** in particular through the reduction of poverty, by aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion. In defining how they will contribute to achieve this target member states can choose to use three different indicators, combined or in

isolation, taking into account their national circumstances and priorities: at-risk-of poverty, material deprivation, and jobless households.

The poverty target (5) is a key new hook to drive better delivery on strategies to reduce child poverty.

The European Commission published seven **flagship initiatives** to guide EU policy-making in a wide range of fields including “Youth on the move”; “An Agenda for new skills and jobs” and the “European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion”.

Each of the flagship initiatives identifies a set of specific proposals and instruments that should be implemented within ten years to help achieve the Europe 2020 objectives. The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion is an important opportunity to adopt a comprehensive EU approach to tackling child poverty and addressing child well-being.

3.2. Implementing Europe 2020 strategy, the European Semester

The Europe 2020 Strategy is part of the EU governance cycle - **the European Semester** - to guide Member States in the coordination of their economic and budgetary policies to comply with both the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Stability and Growth Pact. The latter is the surveillance mechanism to monitor fiscal stability and correct macroeconomic imbalances. The cycle of the thematic (Europe 2020) and the budgetary coordination (of the Stability and Growth Pact) run in parallel.

The cycle starts with EU level policy guidance by the European Commission and the European Council in the **Annual Growth Survey** (AGS). This is accompanied by the Alert Mechanism Report, which based on a scoreboard of indicators, identifies the Member States that require further analysis on potential macroeconomic imbalances.

The implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy **at national level** is monitored through the **National Reform Programmes** (NRPs), which member states have to submit each year by Mid-April. Whilst the Stability and Growth Pact is monitored through the Stability or Convergence Programmes. The NRPs should be based on the **Integrated Guidelines** that aim to assist Member States in translating the Europe 2020 headline targets into national policies. The guidelines were drawn up for a period of five years and comprise six economic guidelines and the four employment guidelines which include improving the quality of jobs, education systems, and promoting social inclusion and combatting poverty.

The NRPs are submitted to the Commission at the same time as the **National Stability and Convergence Programmes** setting out national commitments on budgetary policy. The Social Ministries, through the Social Protection Committee, have also agreed to develop separate **National Social Reports** (NSRs) which will be used to feed into the NRP every two years, drawing on broader social objectives.

In May/June, the Commission reviews the two programmes submitted and proposes **Country-Specific Recommendations** (CSRs) that are adopted by National Governments leaders through the European Council in June and July. Member States are expected to integrate these recommendations into national policies and budgets for the following year, during the so-called ‘national semester’, with the possibility of sanctions particularly as regards the implementation of deficit rules and in the macro-economic priorities.

Stable national budgets are key to maintain a growing economy; however, by linking the Stability and Growth Pact to an initially broad and inclusive Europe 2020 Strategy, the focus has visibly shifted to economic policies where growth and fiscal consolidation are the main drivers. It is especially worrying that the Stability and Growth Pact now allows for stronger sanctions if Member States do not comply with rules on macro-economic imbalances and budget deficits – to which Member States may respond by reducing social expenditure. It is therefore all the more important that actors committed to protect the interests of the most vulnerable in society are vocal and persuasive about the long-term costs to society of ill-conceived cuts to social, health and education budgets.

The official calendar of the European Semester:



3.3 Opportunities for influencing Europe 2020

Links between Europe 2020 and the EC Recommendation

Child poverty has been repeatedly recognised as a political priority at EU level.¹ In the Annual Growth Survey of 2014 child poverty is mentioned as a priority, albeit as part of active inclusion strategies; though child poverty is more present in Joint Employment Report accompanying the AGS. These priorities are expected by the Commission to be reflected strongly in all Member States' National Reform Programmes.

1. See e.g. 2011 the Council Conclusions on child poverty and well-being; 2012 Social Protection Committee's report on child poverty; adopted by Council.

“The risk of poverty or social exclusion for children has risen since 2008 along with the worsened situation of their (mostly working-age) parents in more than 20 Member States. (...) While some Member States have improved benefits addressing child poverty, others have restricted access to or reduced benefits. (...) Similarly mixed signs are found in access to early childhood education and care.”

Extracts from the Joint Employment Report accompanying the Communication from the Commission on Annual Growth Survey 2014

Stakeholder involvement

EU Alliance partners have consistently advocated for more meaningful stakeholder engagement at all governance levels within Europe 2020, and agree that the existing level of consultation is still insufficient. The Integrated Guidelines make explicit reference to stakeholder engagement in an attempt to address concerns over the democratic legitimacy of the policy cycle.

“... the Europe 2020 strategy should, as appropriate, be implemented, monitored and evaluated in partnership with all national, regional and local authorities, closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, who shall contribute to the elaboration of National Reform Programmes, to their implementation and to the overall communication on the strategy.”

Recital 16 of the Integrated Employment Guidelines

The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, the flagship initiative of the European Commission to help reach the poverty reduction target of Europe 2020, also supports stakeholder engagement for European and national/regional organisations. For the moment its visibility culminates in the annual convention, a high-level conference on poverty and social inclusion. Yet, the EU Alliance is in favour of the Platform including a list of actions to raise awareness about the need to tackle child poverty in Europe.

National targets and sub-targets to reduce child poverty

Every EU Member State was requested to set their individual national poverty reduction target to contribute to the EU target of lifting at least 20 million people in the EU out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020, every EU country.

Progress is measured according to the combination of **three key indicators** reflecting risk of poverty and/or exclusion (ARPE): these are

1. at risk of poverty,
2. severe material deprivation and
3. low work intensity².

This multiple indicator enables a more complex measurement of the reality of poverty including relative and more absolute elements. However, Members States are allowed to use one or the com-

.....
2. Eurostat (statistical office of the European Union) http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/europe_2020_indicators/headline_indicators

combination of the three indicators when setting their national targets. As a result, the targets are not comparable. Furthermore, the national targets set so far fall short of contributing to the EU target of 20 million reduction. Indeed poverty is measurably on the rise rather than declining.

While the poverty target covers the overall population, some countries have set **specific or sub targets to reduce child poverty**. Most Member States have acknowledged that to eradicate poverty in the long term, particular priority must be given to children and families. The poverty reduction target can be used to hold government to account to achieve this commitment because:

- **Child poverty figures are generally higher** than poverty rates for the overall population;³
- **A general target may not lift children out of poverty;**
- The lower the levels of child poverty the more **long-term benefits** it creates for children, their families and for the whole society.

However the number of Member States with a specific target to eradicate child poverty and social exclusion is very low. The Recommendation encourages Member States to do so in their NRPs, a clear focus for advocacy should therefore be to **press for sub-targets for children**, particularly in the countries where child poverty has risen, as underlined and supported by the **Independent Experts' Reports**.⁴

Indicators on children

The development of **specific indicators** on children is crucial to assess whether and how policies are impacting on children's lives. The EC Recommendation includes a set of child well-being indicators which will be used to monitor its implementation in the Member States. This indicators portfolio however, is incomplete due to the lack of availability of robust, comparable and timely data across the European Union. More detailed information on specific measures would be needed to improve reporting and to allow a systematic follow-up to progress made at national level.

There is a need to review and develop more indicators that better reflect the policy needs of children, i.e. early childhood education and care, access to education and healthcare, participation in civil and leisure activities, social relationships, family environment as well as perceptions and experiences of children and young people themselves. The Social Protection Committee has established an Indicators Sub-Group specifically with the purpose to contribute to the improvement of social statistics at EU level and to carry out analytical work on progress made at national level. The sub-group should receive continued support to be able to develop better indicators on child poverty and well-being. You can contact your national representative in the Social Protection Committee. They are the Member States' representatives responsible for cooperation on social protection and social inclusion, meeting on a regular basis and are potential allies in this work.

3. Most recent data (2012) highlight that children continue to be most at risk in most countries with an average 28% compared to 24,8% for the overall population in the EU28.

4. The country reports of the European Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion were published in 2014 with the aim to assist the Commission and Member States in the implementation of the Recommendation and inform its monitoring.

NRP process

Drafting of **National Reform Programmes** has become largely a 'reporting' rather than a 'political planning exercise'. However, it remains the most recent summary of government's priorities for employment, economic, education, health, social and environmental policies and sets out how governments are responding to the Commission and Council's country-specific recommendations, which may include action on child poverty; and as such is an important entry point for putting children's well-being on the national policy agenda, and for national stakeholders to have their voices heard. While the processes and timing varies within each Member State, engagement can mean preparing inputs, **attending consultation** meetings, **responding** to drafts and then **reviewing the impact** and results in the final NRP, and **using media** to publicise your messages.

Member States are recommended to submit a National Social Report every two years, in which they detail achievements on social inclusion and social protection. This would be the ideal place to detail national action plans to tackle child poverty; however these are not a requirement under the European Semester and have little political weight.

Influencing EU measures that apply pressure on Member States

The Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) articulate the European Commission's position with regards each Member State's efforts to implement Europe 2020. They are therefore a key instrument for influencing delivery on child poverty. Since 2010 there has been an increase in CSRs relevant for children, including increased reference to tackling child poverty, or improving access to early childhood education and care (or childcare), promoting inclusive education and preventing early school leaving.

The CSRs are accompanied by a detailed assessment of the countries' situation and progress in implementing previous year's recommendations. Officials in the various departments of the European Commission carry out assessments and draft these staff working documents in approx. the same period when governments prepare their NRPs. The European Commission's assessment is the main driver behind upcoming recommendations, and an important phase to influence (see tips below).

Another EU measure is the scoreboard of employment and social indicators. It was created to reinforce the **social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union** and to reduce growing divergences (social imbalances) between Member States, as regards poverty, inequality and unemployment thereby improving macroeconomic stability. It has five social and employment indicators (unemployment, number of young people 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training' (NEETs), disposable income, at risk of poverty and inequalities) and contributes to coordinating social policies with the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP) that can help put pressure on Member States. Unfortunately it is not binding so no preventive and corrective actions can be triggered when excessive social imbalances are registered.

Backing up the scoreboard, the Social Protection Committee proposed a new instrument called the Social Protection Performance Monitor which aims to reinforce coordination of social policy and multilateral surveillance within Europe 2020. This monitor identified child poverty as a key "Trend to Watch", and helps strengthen the monitoring of the social situation in the EU. In our advocacy for

more inclusive policies these instruments should be recalled and strengthened, as they do not pay adequate attention to social dimension in monetary and economic policies.

The **Mid-term review of Europe 2020 strategy** is currently underway. Half way into the strategy, EU institutions are reflecting how to improve the implementation process. This could result in fewer or more changes in the framework and its guidelines. It is the time to share your priorities with your government officials as Europe 2020 will be high on the agenda for the next year also in ministerial meetings.

What can you do?

Overall, try to engage in the Semester process both at EU and national level. Identify opportunities and time your actions to the schedule of the Semester.⁵

INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT POLICIES THROUGH THE NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMMES	INFLUENCING THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S FEEDBACK TO YOUR COUNTRY VIA THE COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>December-January</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Define the target audience to ask to be part of the consultation process on Europe 2020 and the Semester: ministry, regional government officials; the European Semester officers. 2) Find out which stakeholders are already engaging in the process and work together 3) Prepare your messages, highlighting what should be included in the next NRP & NSR. Add supportive arguments that could influence them to make change happen 	<p>July-September</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Study carefully the CSRs and Staff Working Documents addressed to your country and the public reactions of the government officials. 2) Find out which stakeholders are already engaging in the process and work together 3) Prepare your messages, highlighting what is missing from the CSR of the previous semester with supporting evidence (studies, surveys, etc). Build the messages on your assessment of the NRP (see on the left).
<p>February-March</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Period of consultation: ask for involvement from the early stages of the drafting and for feedback on how the inputs were taken into account 5) Make your position public 	<p>October-November</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Send your messages and the supporting evidence to the desk officer responsible for your country in the European Commission DG Employment, the European Semester officers, Independent experts on social inclusion.⁵
<p>April-May</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) After the NRP is submitted to the European Commission give your views to the European networks/partners of the EU Alliance on your engagement in preparing the NRP; and views on its content 	<p>November-January</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Invite them for a study visit to your offices/projects.

.....

5. See chapter 5 and annexes for further information.

4. STRUCTURAL FUNDS

“Promote partnership in the programming of and access to Structural Funds by involving relevant stakeholders at national, regional and local levels, in particular the relevant public authorities, social partners and non-governmental organisations, in order to mobilise action to combat child poverty.”

European Commission Recommendation Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage, Guideline 4.

4.1 How is it relevant for tackling child poverty?

- The mission of Cohesion Policy is to reduce inequalities between regions but also citizens. The European Social Fund (ESF) was established as an instrument for investing in human resources.
- 20% of European Social Fund is meant to be used to deliver on social inclusion and poverty
- The EC Recommendation Investing in Children states that Structural Funds should be used for its implementation at national level.
- The Europe 2020 Strategy has given even more importance to the role that Structural and Investment Funds will have to play, through the delivery of the 5 headline targets
- Governments are meant to have in place anti-poverty strategies to support this implementation
- Given their knowledge of the needs of the most vulnerable groups of people and how to reach them, civil society and local/regional stakeholders should participate in all stages of the processes of Structural Funds (preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).
- A new code of conduct backs the partnership principle to try to ensure that stakeholders are engaged in the managing authorities and in the design and delivery of programmes.
- Civil society and local/regional stakeholders have shown their ability to successfully run projects, and get significant positive outcomes in the field of employment and social inclusion, as was reported in many documents published by the Commission.

Cohesion policy is the second largest expenditure of the European Union, after Common Agricultural Policy. The EUR 325 billion⁶ available for all Structural and Investment Funds⁷ between 2014-2020 is a result of two years of negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on the EU budget. The new Regulations on the Structural and Investment Funds adopted at the end of 2013 include changes in rules, procedures and objectives that now allow for clearer thematic investment in programmes that can have a direct impact on children’s lives.

It was agreed in the negotiations between governments and the European Parliament that from this total amount of the cohesion policy resources, at least 23,1% is allocated to the European Social Fund (ESF). Within the ESF itself, an earmarking of at least 20% of the Social Fund budget shall be used for social inclusion and poverty reduction.

.....
6. in 2011 prices

7. Structural Funds is a term generally used to refer to ESF and the ERDF. Structural and Investment Funds is broader as described above.

Structural and Investment Funds are directed at supporting the targets set in the Europe 2020 strategy. There is also a growing link to the annual reporting cycle of Europe 2020. For instance, Partnership Agreements have to be consistent with Country-Specific Recommendations received by the country from the European Commission.

New conditionality provisions are in place for all Structural and Investment Funds to ensure that EU funding is focused on results and creates strong incentives for Member States to deliver Europe 2020 objectives. The 'ex ante' conditions, which must be in place before funds are disbursed, are of particular importance, as there is a specific one on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, which requires that a national strategy for poverty reduction is in place, involving relevant stakeholders. In practice, this means that a Member State needs to have a national strategy for combating poverty – or the commitment to produce one within a limited amount of time – to be eligible for funding for projects aimed at social inclusion. A set of general conditions also require that countries comply with principles such as non-discrimination, gender equality and implementing the rights of persons with disabilities.

More concretely from the perspective of tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being, the EC Recommendation clearly spells out that social investment, and in particular investing in children must form an integral part of the exit strategy to the current crisis in Member States' policies. More importantly, the EC Recommendation explicitly encourages Member States to use Structural Funds for its implementation at national level.

Examples

To mention a few concrete examples, the ESF regulation includes the following priorities: reconciliation between work and private life; promote access to good quality early childhood education and care (ECEC); prevent and reduce early-school leaving; promote social inclusion and tackle poverty through integrated active inclusion, enhanced access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, and combatting discrimination.

The European Regional Development Fund can also be used to promote social inclusion and education through investing in health, social and education infrastructures, including the transition from institutional to community-based services. The proposed wording in both cases is thus quite inclusive to allow for investment in family and parenting support, support to parents to access quality work through integrated active inclusion strategies, along with quality and accessible ECEC, integrated services for children and addressing the most disadvantaged children.

There is explicit reference to the transition from institutional to community-based care in both the ESF and the ERDF. These references are an opportunity to invest EU money in de-institutionalisation reform for children living in care – particularly in countries which historically have an over-dependence on institutional care.⁸

.....
8. See for instance Eurochild National Survey on Children in Alternative Care, 2010.

There is also a possibility to finance capacity building for all stakeholders, including civil society, delivering education, lifelong learning, training and employment and social policies, at the national, regional and local levels.

In sub-regional areas there is a possibility to use different Structural and Investment Funds combined to implement community-led local development strategies.⁹ These have to be designed and implemented by local action groups composed of representatives of public and private local socio-economic interests, with a strong emphasis on engaging beneficiaries, in which, at the decision-making level neither public authorities, nor any single interest group represents more than 49% of the voting rights. Although this type of investment stems from rural development, it has a strong social component and gives an opportunity for civil society's active engagement at local level.

4.2 Brief overview of the European Structural and Investment Funds

Structural and Investment Funds are, as defined by the Common Provisions Regulation¹⁰, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

These funds will be used to promote a wide range of thematic objectives in 2014-2020 from research, technological development; competitiveness of Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs); to preserving, protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency; a low-carbon economy in all sectors; and sustainable transport. But perhaps most importantly for our purpose in this document they aim to promote sustainable and quality employment, social inclusion, combat poverty and any discrimination; as well as invest in education and lifelong learning.

It is worth recalling the investment priorities of the European Social Fund which are particularly important for supporting the realisation on the EC Recommendation Investing in Children:

Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility:

- i. Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;
- ii. Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee;
- iii. Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation including innovative micro, small and medium sized enterprises;

9. See also European Commission factsheet
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/community_en.pdf

10. Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

- iv. Equality between men and women in all areas, including in access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life and promotion of equal pay for equal work;
- v. Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change;
- vi. Active and healthy ageing;
- vii. Modernisation of labour market institutions, such as public and private employment services, and improving the matching of labour market needs, including through actions that enhance transnational labour mobility as well as through mobility schemes and better cooperation between institutions and relevant stakeholders;

Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination:

- i. Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability and socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma;
- ii. Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities;
- iii. Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest;
- iv. Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment;
- v. Community-led local development strategies;

Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning:

- i. Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training;
- ii. Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups;
- iii. Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences;
- iv. Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes;

Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration:

- i. Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public

services at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance;

- ii. Capacity building for all stakeholders delivering education, lifelong learning, training and employment and social policies, including through sectoral and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at the national, regional and local levels

Implementation

These priorities and objectives have been agreed at EU level in the form of Regulations, and are binding on all EU Member States. As a following step, each Member State had to submit strategic plans with investment priorities covering the five European Structural and Investment Funds called **Partnership Agreements** (PA) to the European Commission.

Based on the lessons learnt during the 2007-2013 programming period and the Commission's legislative proposals for 2014-2020, the European Commission had prepared a position paper on the development of Partnership Agreement and programmes for the period 2014-2020 for every Member State.

The position papers establish a framework for dialogue between the Commission Services and each Member State on preparation of the Partnership Agreement and Operational Programmes (OP) which form the basis for delivery of the EU Structural and Investment Funds¹¹.

>> FIND HERE THE POSITION PAPER RELEVANT FOR YOUR COUNTRY.¹²

The Partnership Agreements are negotiated between the European Commission and national authorities. The Commission has three months from the date of submission of the PA by the Member State to make observations. The Agreement should be adopted no later than four months from its submission, provided that the Member State has adequately taken into account the observations made by the Commission.

It is useful to note that the Partnership Agreement also has to demonstrate how the Member State will apply ex-ante conditionalities; the actions to be taken to meet them; the bodies responsible and the timetable for the implementation of those actions. If the conditionalities (e.g a national strategy for poverty reduction) are not met by the date of submission of the Partnership Agreement, Member States have to fulfil those ex ante conditionalities not later than 31 December 2016 and report on their fulfilment not later than in the annual implementation report in 2017.

Regarding the preparation of Operational Programmes the Regulation establishes that Operational Programmes (OPs) have to be submitted by Member States at the latest three months following the submission of the PA.

The Commission shall make observations within three months of the date of submission of the OP and adopt the OP no later than six months from the date of its submission, provided that the Mem-

11. See European Commission, DG Regional Policy, at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/index_en.cfm.

12. http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/program/index_en.cfm

ber State has adequately taken into account the Commission observations. Therefore, OPs are expected to be adopted by end of January 2015¹³. Until the Partnership Agreement is adopted, the Operational Programmes cannot be approved.

>> SEE HERE YOUR COUNTRY'S PA; AND THE OPS WILL BE HERE ONCE ADOPTED

NEGOTIATIONS START:	Member State submits Partnership Agreement
MAX. THREE MONTHS AFTER START	European Commission makes observations to Partnership Agreement Member State submits Operational Programmes
MAX. FOUR MONTHS AFTER START	European Commission adopts Partnership Agreement
MAX. SIX MONTHS AFTER START	European Commission makes observations to Operational Programmes
MAX. NINE MONTHS AFTER START	European Commission adopts Operational Programmes
MAX. ONE YEAR AFTER START	Member State sets up the Monitoring Committee to monitor implementation of the Operational Programme

4.3 Opportunities for influencing the European Structural Funds

Partnership is a key principle for the successful implementation of the Structural and Investment Funds. As established in the Common Provisions Regulation, the partners - including bodies representing civil society - should be involved by Member States in the preparation of Partnership Agreements and progress reports and in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, including in the Monitoring Committees.¹⁴

Article 5 Common Provisions Regulation Partnership and multi-level governance

1. For the Partnership Agreement and each programme, each Member State shall in accordance with its institutional and legal framework organise a partnership with the competent regional and local authorities. The partnership shall also include the following partners:

- a. competent urban and other public authorities;
- b. economic and social partners;
- c. relevant bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination.

In accordance with the multi-level governance approach, the partners referred to in paragraph 1 **shall be involved by Member States in the preparation of Partnership Agreements and progress re-**

13. Source: European Commission, DG Regional Policies.

14. Article 5.2, Regulation 1303/2013.

ports and throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes, including through participation in the monitoring committees for programmes in accordance with Article 48.

The Commission Regulation on the European Code of Conduct on Partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds sends a strong signal to Member States that any future investments of EU Funds should be planned and implemented **in close cooperation with civil society and other stakeholders**. The regulation was adopted by the Commission on 7 January 2014 and is now in force and directly applicable in all Member States.

The key provisions include the following requirements: partners must be selected transparently from relevant stakeholders including civil society; partners must be involved in the preparation and implementation of the Partnership Agreement and programmes; partners must be represented within the monitoring committees of programmes; efforts should be made to strengthen the capacity of these partners. The Managing Authority in each Member States should be made accountable to stakeholders, including civil society, for instance through their active and meaningful involvement in the Monitoring Committees.

The regulation asks Member States to pay special attention to persons likely to be significantly affected by the programmes including persons with disabilities, or people of migrant or Roma origin. In addition, it states that the Commission will set up a cooperation mechanism called 'the European Community of Practice on Partnership (ECP), which will be open to organisations representing partners at EU level.

What can you do?

1. Identify the Operational Programme and the relevant Managing Authority you want to address
2. Gather information on the state of play on negotiations of the OP and upcoming calls for proposals
3. Find out which stakeholders are already engaging and work together
4. **Contact your National Authorities** (both Ministries of Finance and/or in charge of Social Affairs (ESF) and Regional Development (ERDF)) to find out how they are developing the process and what the potential is for engagement.
5. Contact your **Desk Officers in the European Commission** DG REGIO and EMPL who are responsible for monitoring the implementation of funding and of Europe 2020 priorities, to get the views of the Commission on progress in your country.

Overall, timing is crucial: **the sooner you take action the better.**

BUILDING YOUR ARGUMENTS

Stakeholder engagement is not a luxury but a requirement on Member States according to the Code of Conduct on Partnership and the Common Provisions Regulation - is there a process of selection & a public register of members of the Monitoring Committee?

Minimum benchmarks: does the PA reflect at least 23,5% for ESF? Does the OP for ESF reflect a minimum of 20% for poverty reduction?

Structural Funds should be used to implement the EC Recommendation – are there any priorities in the OPs promoting children's well-being? Try to identify gaps and opportunities for investing EU resources in children and support your messages with data / evidence.

A national strategy has to be in place for tackling poverty before EU money can be invested in it - Check the proposals against the specific and general ex ante conditionalities!

Tie your advocacy on the Structural Funds to the work you are doing on Europe 2020: remember the relevance of political obligations – e.g. the Country-Specific Recommendations – for EU financing!

5. KEY CONTACTS

European Commission

Below is a list of heads of units in DG REGIO (Regional Policy) and EMPL (Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion). They will help you to find the Desk Officer who is in charge of your own country. Desk officers in DG EMPL will be responsible both for Europe 2020 and for the European Social Fund. Desk officers in DG REGIO will be responsible for ERDF and the Cohesion Fund.

HEADS OF UNIT	DG REGIO	HEADS OF UNIT	DG EMPL
BELGIUM, FRANCE, LUXEMBURG	carsten.rasmussen@ec.europa.eu	BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS, FRANCE, LUXEMBURG	egidio.canciani@ec.europa.eu
IRELAND, UNITED KINGDOM	agnes.lindemans@ec.europa.eu	IRELAND, UNITED KINGDOM, GREECE, CYPRUS	filip.busz@ec.europa.eu
GREECE, CYPRUS	sabine.bourdy@ec.europa.eu		
GERMANY, NETHERLANDS	marc-eric.dufeil@ec.europa.eu	GERMANY, AUSTRIA, SLOVENIA, CROATIA	adam.pokorny@ec.europa.eu
AUSTRIA, SLOVENIA, CROATIA	raphael.goulet@ec.europa.eu		
SPAIN	andrea.mairate@ec.europa.eu	SPAIN, PORTUGAL,	emma.toledano-laredo@ec.europa.eu
PORTUGAL	judit.torokne-rozsa@ec.europa.eu		
ITALY, MALTA	willebrordus.sluijters@ec.europa.eu	ITALY, DENMARK, SWEDEN	denis.genton@ec.europa.eu
POLAND	patrick.amblard@ec.europa.eu	POLAND, SLOVAKIA, CZECH REPUBLIC	wallis.goelen-vandebrock@ec.europa.eu
CZECH REPUBLIC	elena.grech@ec.europa.eu		
SLOVAKIA	christopher.todd@ec.europa.eu		
ESTONIA, FINLAND, LATVIA	angela.martinez-sarasola@ec.europa.eu	ESTONIA, FINLAND, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, HUNGARY	jiri.svarc@ec.europa.eu
LITHUANIA, SWEDEN, DENMARK	dorota-kalina.zaliwska@ec.europa.eu		
HUNGARY	jack.engwegen@ec.europa.eu		
ROMANIA	anton.schrag@ec.europa.eu	ROMANIA, BULGARIA, MALTA	aurelio.cecilio@ec.europa.eu

Source: EAPN Toolkit on Structural Funds for Social NGOs, October 2012

In addition, every EU capital city has a European Commission Representation which helps to bring the Commission closer to what is going on the Member States. The Commission has now posted specialist **“European Semester Officers”** in each Representation.

The European Semester Officers are economic policy experts who can help to explain the details of EU economic governance to national stakeholders. Their mission is also to get a balanced picture of the

challenges that the Member State is facing so that the annual country-specific recommendations will best reflect the realities on the ground. They work together with all relevant groups across society, including ministries, national, regional and local parliaments, social partners and other interest groups.

To find a European Semester Officer in your country, please consult the **websites of the European Commission Representations**.

A key contact for your country on social inclusion is the respective member of the Social Protection Committee (SPC). The SPC is an EU advisory policy committee for the Employment and Social Affairs Ministers which monitors social conditions in the EU and the development of social protection policies in Member States. The Committee reports on social inclusion, health care, long-term care and pensions under the social Open Method of Coordination. It also produces reports and opinions on its own initiative or at the request of the Council or the Commission linked to the European Semester, among them the Social Protection Performance Monitor. The SPC has had an important role in preparing the EC Recommendation and has done important work to keep child poverty high on the EU agenda.¹⁵

National authorities

Key contacts in national governments on Europe 2020 are the ministries of Social Affairs & Employment and ministries of Finance & Economy.

The detailed management of programmes which receive support from the Structural Funds is the responsibility of the Member States. For every programme, they designate a managing authority (at national, regional or another level) which will inform potential beneficiaries, select the projects and generally monitor implementation.

>> TO FIND YOUR **ESF MANAGING AUTHORITY, PLEASE CLICK HERE** <http://bit.ly/1KdRmID>

>> TO FIND YOUR **ERDF MANAGING AUTHORITY, PLEASE CLICK HERE** <http://bit.ly/1De7Sj7>

Network of Independent Experts on social Inclusion

A Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion assists the European Commission in monitoring and evaluating the situation with regard to poverty and social exclusion and the policies that are relevant in this respect in 34 European countries: the 28 EU Member States and six non-EU countries (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, and Turkey).

Members of the **European Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion** prepared country reports to assist the Commission and Member States in the implementation of the Recommendation and inform its monitoring, in particular in the context of the European Semester and the cooperation in the social area between EU countries and the European Commission. You might want to contact your country's expert at the same time you approach the Commission desk officers.

.....

15. See your SPC member here: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=4079&langId=en>

6. GLOSSARY

AGS – Annual Growth Survey. It takes stock of the economic and social situation in Europe and sets out broad policy priorities for the EU as a whole for the coming year. AGS is the main tool for EU-level economic policy coordination, and it ensures that Member States align their budgetary and economic policies with the Stability and Growth Pact and the Europe 2020 Strategy. It is the launch of the European Semester, and should feed into national economic and budgetary decisions, which Member States set out in Stability and Convergence Programmes (under the Stability and Growth Pact) and National Reform Programmes (under the Europe 2020 strategy).

CSRs – Country-Specific Recommendations. These are documents prepared by the European Commission for each Member State, analysing its economic situation and providing recommendations on measures it should adopt over the coming 12 months. These are the official responses to the Stability and Convergence Programmes (under the Stability and Growth Pact) and National Reform Programmes (under the Europe 2020 strategy). CSRs are tailored to the particular issues the Member State is facing and cover a broad range of topics: the state of public finances, reforms of pension systems, measures to create jobs and to fight unemployment and poverty, education and innovation challenges, etc.

DG REGIO - The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy in the European Commission. The mission of DG REGIO is to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities between the levels of development of regions and countries of the European Union.

DG EMPL - The Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in the European Commission. It has the task of contributing to the development of a modern, innovative and sustainable European social model with more and better jobs in an inclusive society based on equal opportunities.

EPSCO - The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council. The EPSCO Council brings together ministers responsible for employment, social affairs, health and consumer policy from all EU member states. Relevant European Commissioners also participate in meetings. There are usually 4 EPSCO meetings a year. Two of the meetings are generally devoted exclusively to employment and social policy topics.

EPAP – European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion. It is one of the seven Flagship Initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, which sets out actions to reach the EU target of reducing poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million people by 2020. Key actions: improved access to work, social security, essential services (healthcare, housing, etc.) and education; better use of EU funds to support social inclusion and combat discrimination; social innovation to find smart solutions in post-crisis Europe, especially in terms of more effective and efficient social support; new partnerships between the public and the private sector.

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund. It is a Structural Fund that aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions. The ERDF focuses its investments on several key priority areas: innovation and research; the digital agenda; support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); the low-carbon economy. The ERDF

resources allocated to these priorities will depend on the category of region: in more developed regions, at least 80 % of funds must focus on at least two of these priorities; in transition regions, this focus is for 60 % of the funds; this is 50 % in less developed regions. Furthermore, some ERDF resources must be channelled specifically towards low-carbon economy projects: more developed regions: 20%; transition regions: 15%; and less developed regions: 12%.

ESF – European Social Fund. This Structural Fund invests in people, with a focus on improving employment and education opportunities across the European Union. It also aims to improve the situation of the most vulnerable people at risk of poverty. The ESF investments cover all EU regions. More than € 80 billion is earmarked for human capital investment in Member States between 2014 and 2020, with an extra of at least € 3.2 billion allocated to the Youth Employment Initiative. For the 2014-2020 period, the ESF will focus on four of the cohesion policy's thematic objectives: promoting employment and supporting labour mobility; promoting social inclusion and combating poverty; investing in education, skills and lifelong learning; enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration. In addition, 20 % of ESF investments will be committed to activities improving social inclusion and combating poverty. This is known as thematic concentration.

ESIF – Structural and Investment Funds. EU Cohesion policy aims to support economic, social and territorial cohesion across the EU. It strongly contributes to the objectives of Europe 2020—playing a significant role in supporting sustainable, social and economic restructuring across Europe. These policies add to socio-economic development and employment growth—helping the economy while protecting natural resources. European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) formerly called Structural and Cohesion Funds support this agenda over the period 2014-2020. They comprise the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

European Code of Conduct on Partnership – is a legally-binding Commission Regulation, which sets out objectives and criteria to ensure that Member States implement the partnership principle. It requires Member States to strengthen cooperation between their authorities responsible for spending EU structural and investment funds and project partners.

European Semester – is the first phase of the EU's annual cycle of policy guidance and economic surveillance. Each European Semester, the European Commission analyses the fiscal and structural reform policies of every Member State, provides recommendations, and monitors their implementation. In the second phase of the annual cycle, known as the National Semester, Member States implement the policies they have agreed. The European Semester begins around November each year with the publication of two key economic reports: the Annual Growth Survey and the Alert Mechanism Report.

European Semester Officers – are economic policy experts who can help to explain the sometimes complex details of EU economic governance to national stakeholders. Their mission is also to get a balanced picture of the challenges that the Member State is facing so that the annual country-specific recommendations will best reflect the realities on the ground. They work together with all relevant stakeholder groups.

Ex-ante conditionalities – these are an essential part of the preparations for the next programming period. They represent pre-conditions that all Member States will have to fulfil and are linked to the effective and efficient use of EU funds. Should ex-ante conditionalities not be fulfilled by the time the Partnership Agreement (PA) has been submitted, EU countries will need to present the European Commission with an action plan and a timetable for implementation. Ex-ante conditionalities must be fulfilled no later than 31 December 2016 (or within two year following the adoption of the PA).

Independent Social Inclusion Experts - A Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion assists the European Commission in monitoring and evaluating the situation with regard to poverty and social exclusion and the policies that are relevant in this respect in the Member States and Accession countries (Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Iceland). Each year, experts provide two reports on their respective countries with regard to a specific subject that is being examined in the context of the EU social inclusion process, and an independent (non-governmental) assessment of an official policy document (the social inclusion strand of the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion or an official reply to a Social Protection Committee questionnaire on a specific topic). The Network Core Team produces synthesis reports, bringing together the main results of the analysis across countries.

Integrated Guidelines - These are a set of 10 guidelines, developed by the European Commission, aimed at helping Member States to implement the 5 overarching targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy. While the first 6 are macro-economic guidelines, the final 4 (numbers 7 through 10) are the so-called “employment guidelines”, and deal with the employment, education, and poverty-reduction targets of Europe 2020. The Guidelines are supposed to provide a basis for the NRPs.

Managing Authority - The detailed management of Operational Programmes which receive support from the Structural Funds is the responsibility of the Member States. For every programme, they designate a managing authority (at national, regional or another level) which will inform potential beneficiaries, select the projects and generally monitor implementation.

MIP – Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure. This is a surveillance mechanism that aims to identify potential risks early on, prevent the emergence of harmful macroeconomic imbalances and correct the imbalances that are already in place. The annual starting point of the MIP is the Alert Mechanism Report: Based on a scoreboard of indicators, it is a filter to identify countries and issues for which a closer analysis (in-depth review) is deemed necessary. The outcome of these in-depth reviews forms the basis for further steps under the MIP. The MIP has a preventive and a corrective arm. The latter is made operational by the Excessive Imbalance Procedure, which can eventually lead to sanctions for euro area Member States if they repeatedly fail to meet their obligations.

MFF – Multiannual Financial Framework is the EU’s seven-year framework for financial programming and budgetary discipline. It lays down the maximum annual amounts (‘ceilings’) which the EU may spend in different political fields (‘headings’) over the period 2014 - 2020.

Monitoring Committees are set by the Member State to monitor implementation of an Operational Programme under Structural and Investment Funds, and functions in agreement with the managing authority. The composition of the monitoring committee shall be decided by the Member State, provided that it includes representatives of the relevant Member State authorities, intermediate bodies

and of representatives of stakeholders defined by the Common Provisions.

NRPs – National Reform Programmes are annual plans submitted by the Governments of the Member States in April each year, within the scope of the Europe 2020 Strategy (2010-2020). They are meant to show how Member States are implementing the overarching targets of Europe 2020 (translated by each into national targets), while taking into account the Integrated Guidelines.

NSRs – National Social Reports represent the bi-annual reporting of Member States on their strategies and progress achieved towards the Common Objectives for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, and support the assessment of the social dimension of Europe 2020. The input should cover policies and measures in the three strands of the Social OMC and ensure synergies with the Europe 2020 policy cycle and national reporting requirements. These national reports feed into the SPC Annual Report, which includes the annual assessment of the social dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy to input into the Annual Growth Survey.

OPs – Operational Programmes are planned by the Member States and their regions together with the European Commission for the implementation of Structural and Investment Funds. The Operational Programmes describe the fields of activity that will be funded, which can be geographical or thematic, and have to be in line with the overall Partnership Agreement.

PAs – Partnership Agreements. PAs are signed between the European Commission and individual EU countries setting out the national authorities' plans on how to use funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds between 2014 and 2020. They outline each country's strategic goals and investment priorities, linking them to the overall aims of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

SIP – Social Investment Package is an integrated policy framework which takes account of the social, economic and budgetary divergences between Member States. It is a comprehensive set of documents, released by the European Commission on 20 February 2013. The Package includes the Communication: Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund; the Recommendation Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of Disadvantage; and 8 staff working documents. It builds on the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion and complements other recent Commission initiatives to address Europe's social and economic challenges, namely the Employment Package, Youth Employment Package and the White Paper on Pensions.

OMC – Social Open Method of Coordination. For policy areas where the European Union cannot adopt European legislation (i.e. areas which remain the responsibility of national governments), there are soft law methods which are used to promote cooperation between EU countries. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is one of these soft law methods. The OMC provides a framework for cooperation between the Member States, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives. Under this intergovernmental method, the Member States are evaluated by one another (peer pressure), with the Commission's role being limited to monitoring and facilitating. Member States since 2000 co-ordinate their policies for combating poverty and social exclusion through the Social OMC.

SPC – Social Protection Committee. It is an EU advisory policy committee for Employment and Social Affairs Ministers in the Employment and Social Affairs Council (EPSCO). SPC was established in 2000 in order to serve as a vehicle for cooperative exchange between the European Commission and the Member States of the EU about modernising and improving social protection systems. The Committee consists of two representatives appointed by each Member State and two representatives of the Commission. The national delegates of the SPC provide a voice for national Governments in the framework of the EU strategy for social inclusion and social protection, and monitor closely the initiatives launched in this process.

SPPM – Social Protection Performance Monitor. This important new instrument, developed through the Social OMC and the Indicators Sub-Group of the SPC, aims to reinforce coordination of social policy and multilateral surveillance. The SPPM will strengthen the monitoring of the social situation in Europe by the SPC (art. 160 TFEU), identifying the main common social trends and reinforcing the multilateral surveillance capacity of the SPC, enhancing the Committee's role in the European Semester, and helping the EPSCO have a stronger and more powerful voice in defending social issues in the European Council. It will make full use of the EU portfolio of indicators on social protection and social inclusion, which will be the main source for the indicators.

Scoreboard of employment and social indicators – is a part of the Joint Employment Report prepared by the European Commission. The results of the scoreboard, together with other instruments such as the Employment Performance Monitor and the Social Protection Performance Monitor, are further analysed by the Commission in the preparation of Country-Specific Recommendations and through multilateral surveillance with the Member States.

Structural Funds – is the joint name for the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013 Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage, 2013/112/EU

Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage. A study of national policies, European Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, 2014

Eurochild and EAPN Explainer "Towards Children's Well-Being in the EU"

EAPN Toolkit on Engaging with Europe 2020 and the European Semester, March 2014

Toolkit for engaging with Europe 2020 and the European Semester 2014-2015, EU Alliance for a democratic, social and sustainable European Semester, June 2014

EAPN Toolkit on Structural Funds for Social NGOs, October 2012

Background Paper to the Conference "Taking action to fight child poverty and to promote child well-being", 10-11 April 2013, Dublin, on Structural Funds

Background Paper to the Conference "Taking action to fight child poverty and to promote child well-being", 10-11 April 2013, Dublin, on Europe 2020

Background Paper to the Conference "Taking action to fight child poverty and to promote child well-being", 10-11 April 2013, Dublin, Influencing the public and decision-makers

Overall assessment of the European Commission Recommendation "Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage" & suggestions for implementation at national level, Eurochild 2013

Common Provisions Regulation

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303&from=EN>

ESF Regulation 1304/2013

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1304>

ERDF Regulation 1301/2013

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0289:0302:EN:PDF>

Commission Regulation on the European code of conduct on partnership

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/pdf/preparation/da_code%20of%20conduct_en.pdf

ANNEX 1

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE & ADVOCACY PLANNER

Identify and map stakeholders

No matter how specific your theme is, it is very unlikely that you will be advocating alone. A variety of individuals, groups and organisations can have a stake in your advocacy issue, and could be even developing parallel strategies.

Key **stakeholders** are those individuals, organisations or communities who are affected by an issue and/or have the power to influence it

To identify and map **allies** and potential members of a prospective Alliance

>> **WHO ELSE IS ADVOCATING ON CHILD POVERTY AND WELL-BEING IN YOUR COUNTRY? CAN YOU LEARN FROM EACH OTHER?**

To agree on a basis for future joint work

>> **DEPARTING FROM THE EC RECOMMENDATION: WHERE IS YOUR COMMON GROUND, WHAT ARE YOUR COMMON OBJECTIVES? WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF WORKING TOGETHER (IT CAN BE DIFFERENT PER PARTNER)?**

Developing a joint advocacy strategy: Step 1

Understand the situation

TEMPLATE FOR GATHERING INFORMATION

Compile static and dynamic information

>> WHAT ARE THE MAIN ISSUES CONCERNING CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING IN YOUR COUNTRY? WHAT ARE YOUR ADVOCACY PRIORITIES?

Developing a joint advocacy strategy: Step 2

TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Identify **objectives**

>> BASED ON THE INFORMATION GATHERED AT STEP 1, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE AND WHY?

Identify your primary and secondary **target audiences**

>> WHO ARE THE DECISION MAKERS THAT CAN MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN?

Research and map your targets

>> WHERE DO THEY STAND? WHAT WOULD INFLUENCE THEM TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN?

Identify key **messages**

>> What do your targets need to hear?

Determine your **strategies**, identify **opportunities**

>> What approach should you use to best influence your targets, and when?

Set your **activities** and **outputs**

>> What will you concretely do?

Developing a joint advocacy strategy Step 3

MONITOR AND EVALUATE

Based on the strategy you developed at step 3, identify **indicators** to monitor and evaluate your outputs, outcomes and impact

>> HOW DO YOU KNOW IT'S WORKING AND SHOULD YOU ADAPT YOUR APPROACH?

Build on the **lessons learned**

>> HOW CAN YOU USE THIS KNOWLEDGE IN THE FUTURE?

Adapted from CARE, Advocacy Tools and Guidelines, <http://www.care.org/getinvolved/advocacy/tools.asp> and Chris Stalker, A Research-Based Approach to Issue Advocacy

ANNEX 2

TEMPLATE TO COLLECT COUNTRY-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Why

In the framework of the **Alliance for Investing in Children**, we encourage you to use EU opportunities, in particular the EC Recommendation in complementing and enhancing your advocacy activities. You can start planning your advocacy by gathering recent information on policy reforms related to child poverty and social inclusion across your country.

Understanding the situation

<p>Negotiations start: Is there a legal or policy framework (e.g. national strategy) in your country for tackling child poverty?</p> <p>If not, is there an explicit commitment by the Government/relevant Ministers/the Parliament to launch or develop an integrated child poverty strategy or Action Plan?</p>	
<p>Is there any evidence or research showing the main causes of child poverty in your country?</p>	
<p>What advocacy work has been carried out within your network/among partners so far on child poverty?</p>	
REFERENCES AND SOURCES	

The way forward

Looking at the EC Recommendation, what would you say are the most positive developments with regards to children's well-being reforms in the last years?	
Are there any practices / projects you would highlight?	
Departing from the EC Recommendation, what would you say are the main standing obstacles to reforms promoting child well-being?	
Departing from the Ec Recommendation what would be your key suggestions to promote child well-being and better use of EU funding in your country? (Please name five measures you would prioritise)	
Which government body (ministry, local authority) is responsible for addressing these challenges? Who are the political targets of advocacy?	
Which EU level actor should you address?	

ANNEX 3

TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Why this template?

This template is an informal guide to help draft a national **advocacy strategy**, aimed at transforming the recommendations identified in the previous template into concrete changes in law, policy and practice that will ultimately improve children's lives.

This template intends to be a flexible tool to help elaborating an advocacy strategy adapted to the context and peculiarities of a country, either as an organisation, a network, or in the framework of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children.

1. Identify objectives

The **goal** of EU Alliance for Investing in Children advocacy initiative is 'to ensure effective implementation of the Investing in Children Recommendation by facilitating stakeholder cooperation at EU and national level and supporting effective advocacy and communication activities'.

Our advocacy **objectives** are the specific changes we hope to achieve in the short-medium term on the way to achieving our goal. The following objectives have been identified for Joint Action EU Alliance for Investing in Children:

1. To secure and retain political will to fight child poverty and promote child well-being
2. To trigger and support reform in policies and practice based on what we know works best for children
3. To build/strengthen the advocacy capacity of national NGOs in decision-making on public policy and resource allocation

It is suggested to keep them as a reference point to identify more specific national objectives, adapted to the national context.

A few tips to identify your objectives:

- Objectives can concern changes in policy, practice, funding, attitudes, etc. Try to be clear about what you are trying to achieve.
- Objectives should be at least measurable and achievable. This means that you should be realistic about the feasibility of your plans and be able to track progress.
- Be careful not to mix up objectives and activities. For instance, 'to lobby the European Commission' and 'to organise a conference on child poverty and Structural Funds' are not objectives, but activities that can help you achieving an objective, for example 'child poverty and well-being are explicitly mentioned as a priority area in the Operational Programme for the 2014-2020 European Social Fund'.

IDENTIFY 2 OR 3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR ADVOCACY AT NATIONAL LEVEL
WITHIN THE TIME- FRAME OF THE JOINT ACTION (2014):

1.

2.

3.

2. Identifying target audiences

After having set up your objectives, you will need to identify the policy or decision makers who have the power to bring about the changes you want to achieve. These will become the targets of your action. Targets can be divided into primary and secondary:

- Your primary targets are the ones who have the authority to make the desired changes. Examples: national politicians and senior civil servants responsible for children and families or related portfolios/ministries (e.g. health); members of national Parliament; national officials responsible for allocating and managing EU Funds; etc.
- Your secondary targets are the ones who have the ability to influence the decisions taken by your primary targets. Example: EU officials, local authorities responsible for service provision and management, etc.
- Tip: think about your targets as individuals, rather than institutions/organisations. Example: Maria Rossi, MP; Peter Smith, Head of Unit Ministry of Social Affairs; etc.

MAKE A LIST OF YOUR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TARGETS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

1. Primary targets:

2. Secondary targets:

3. Research and map your targets

Once you know who your targets are, you need to understand what can influence them to bring about the change you desire. In order to do so, you can 'map' them in order to know how they are positioning themselves in relation to your issue:

MAP YOUR TARGETS. TRY TO UNDERSTAND:	
How interested they are in your issue	
How much they agree with you	
How influential they are	
How much they know about it	
What you would like them to do	
How accessible they are	
What type of arguments/pressure they will respond to	
Who are they accountable to	

Table adapted from UNICEF, Advocacy Toolkit – A guide to influencing decisions that improve children's lives. pp. 32-33.

A very useful tool to map your targets is a **power mapping** grid:



Specific strategies can be developed to deal with stakeholders according to where they are situated in the grid. Your aim is to 'move' opponents by making them less opposed, passive or even allies¹⁶. Similarly, you can try to increase the power of your allies, activate powerful stakeholders who were previously passive or 'neutralise' the most active adversaries.

.....
16. UNICEF, Advocacy Toolkit – A guide to influencing decisions that improve children's lives. pp. 31.

4. Identify your key messages

Messages for your target audiences should be short, clear and compelling; precision and simplicity are essential elements. An important principle to elaborate persuasive messages is to tailor them to your targets, focusing on what they need to hear. The deeper you understand your targets (their interest, concerns, agendas, etc.) the more effective your messages will be.

DRAFT 2 KEY MESSAGES TAILORED TO YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES (E.G. MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, OFFICIAL FROM A MANAGING AUTHORITY FOR THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS, ETC.):	
TARGET (a person)	MESSAGE (what do they need to hear?)

5. Identify the rights tactics and opportunities

A useful tool to identifying appropriate tactics and opportunities for your Alliance is the SWOT analysis. The purpose of a SWOT is to look at its internal Strengths and Weaknesses, as well as external Opportunities and Threats.

A SWOT can be very helpful to highlight positive elements to be exploited and potential problems that need to be addressed (or at least recognised).

- **Internal Strengths/Weaknesses** can include your resources and experiences, e.g. human, physical and financial resources, activities and programmes, past experiences...
- **External Opportunities/Threats** include elements that are not under your control, e.g. political environment, culture, economy, funding, demographics, legislations, events...¹⁷

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

Depending on the threats and opportunities you identified, but also on your internal weaknesses and strengths, you can decide about the tactics that you will put in place (e.g. face-to-face lobby, working with partners, addressing the media, etc.)

.....

17. The Community Tool Box, <http://ctb.ku.edu>.

It can be helpful also to identify **key milestones** in your national political environment that could offer interesting opportunities for advocacy:

What milestone (examples):	When
National elections	
Finalisation Structural Funds Operational Programmes	Spring 2015

6. Decide your activities and outputs

The last step is to decide on your activities and outputs. This will be your Work Programme in the end. Do not feel stressed if at the beginning you can plan activities only for a limited time-frame (e.g. 4-5 months), or if you do not have all the details yet.

EXAMPLE FOR ACTIVITIES/WORK PROGRAMME				
Activities	Expected outcomes	Expected date of delivery	Who is in charge?	Planned Budget
E.g. high level conference on the implementation of the national child poverty strategy & EC Recommendation	MPs and newly elected MEPs give support to Alliance, and commit to regular national reporting under Europe 2020	February	Planning team: Logistics team:	Venue Catering

FOR MORE INFORMATION



www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu



#AllianceliC



Eurochild - Coordinator of the Alliance for Investing in Children
info@eurochild.org - www.eurochild.org

THE PARTNERS



The EU Alliance for Investing in Children is a temporary initiative developed in the framework of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS. This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields. The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-28, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries. For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>