



**Observatory for
Sociopolitical Developments
in Europe**

Tackling Child Poverty and Social Exclusion

Approaches and Experiences of State Support for Children in Europe

European Expert Meeting on 27 May 2019

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1 Introduction and Summary

Introduction

The issue of child poverty receives a high level of attention in many European countries and at EU level. It is also high on the political agenda in economically strong countries. After all, despite state financial support and measures to promote opportunities for participation, children are affected by poverty more often than the general population. It has been shown that poverty can have a negative impact on the development of children and is often reflected in poorer opportunities far beyond childhood and adolescence. Child poverty thus has lasting negative effects for society as a whole.

Against this background, the [Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe](#) and the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth organised the European Expert Meeting “Tackling Child Poverty and Social Exclusion – Approaches and Experiences of State Support for Children in Europe” in Berlin on 27 May 2019. Representatives of national governments, European institutions, NGOs and researchers in the respective field presented and discussed different approaches and experiences with state benefits for children and families designed to protect against poverty and to secure opportunities for participation. The focus was not only on cash benefits but also on non-financial benefits in the form of services, especially childcare, as well as counselling and support services for families. The focus was on the question of how these services and benefits relate to each other and how the access to these state benefits can be simplified in order to reach all families and their children.

The financial support for children and families in European countries varies. Among other things, there are differences with regard to the associated objectives, the target groups, the scope, the eligibility requirements and the application processes. Often, universal benefits that are provided without restriction to all children or families stand alongside specific benefits for target groups with an above-average poverty risk (for example single parents) or for those with special needs (for example due to disabilities). Benefits that are not related to income, which usually require a one-time application and can then be obtained for a longer period, stand alongside those which require a means test (for example via an income assessment) and are often granted for shorter periods. The sometimes very complex and multi-layered benefit systems can obstruct the goal of enabling equal opportunities for all children. Therefore, many countries face the same challenges: disparities in the take-up of benefits, inadequate targeting of particularly vulnerable groups, a lack of transparency as well as problems caused by reciprocal credit mechanisms when receiving several benefits. The idea of comprehensively protecting children via one single monetary benefit is attracting a lot of attention in many countries. As well does the question of how access to the various benefits can be simplified and improved drive the discussion about optimising state support.

Against this backdrop, and taking into account current national and European initiatives, the Expert Meeting served as a Europe-wide exchange, focusing on approaches and experiences on how to design state support for children with the aim of tackling child poverty and social exclusion more effectively.

The following key questions were at the centre of this exchange:

- Which models of financial benefits for children, which consist of a single benefit and support children independently from their parents, can currently be found in Europe, and what are their advantages and disadvantages?
- Which kind of benefits and infrastructure exist in Europe to promote education and social participation of children? How are these kinds of benefits combined with financial benefits?
- How can the access to both financial and non-financial benefits be simplified for children and families?

Summary of the central findings of the Expert Meeting:

Models of state support for children and families

- Child poverty is considered to be **multidimensional** and viewed as a multi-layered problem. Not all measurement concepts can map it accurately. In all countries participating in the exchange, children are protected via a **combination of services and benefits** from different areas. However, financial benefits continue to be a decisive factor for the well-being of children and families. In addition to this, well-developed childcare infrastructures, counselling and support services for families, measures to facilitate the reconciliation of family and work, social benefits in the form of basic security for parents as well as further subsidies for families at risk of poverty, for example in the area of housing, are central.
- Particular importance is attached to a well-developed **childcare system**, as it promotes the participation of parents, especially mothers, in the labour market and increases the children's chances of participation. In both Finland and Sweden, the focus is on a strong service infrastructure for children and families. In Germany, legal reforms aim to expand high-quality education and care for all children ("*Gute-Kita-Gesetz*").
- **Universal benefits** for all children and families as well as target-group-specific benefits tackling special needs are widespread. In Sweden and Finland, universal benefits are particularly important, whereas **target-group-specific benefits** play a rather subordinate role. Germany, on the other hand, is currently reforming its legislation to explicitly support families at risk of poverty and their children ("*Starke-Familien-Gesetz*").
- So far, there have not been any implemented models for the financial protection of children **through a single monetary benefit** in Europe.
- Children are mainly covered by benefits that do not address them independently of their parents.
- There are proposals for **conceptual approaches** by civil society stakeholders. These propose the provision of a single monetary benefit ("guaranteed child allowance") for the independent protection of children. This is the case in Germany and Austria. However, some important questions regarding the financing and implementation of such approaches remain unanswered for the time being.

Access to benefits for children and families

- In order to improve access to benefits and services, the focus lies on **reducing bureaucratic hurdles** and offering low-threshold support during the application processes.

- In order to provide reliable support, benefits should be designed in a transparent way that is easy to understand. For example, “**hard fault lines**” in accessing means-tested benefits are to avoid. Germany has taken this path with the “strong families act” (*Starke-Familien-Gesetz*).
- A **centralisation of services** in the sense of “one-stop agencies” can facilitate access to benefits. Finland and Cyprus have had good experiences with managing all child and family benefits via a single contact point for families.
- Moreover, an **automatic payment** of benefits without the need to apply can also improve the access to services. Flanders, for example, pays its child benefit automatically without any necessary applications.
- Centres for children and families provide **low-threshold support from one single source**. In Flanders, family centres offer a wide range of services for families as well as counselling for everyday life – all comprised in one single, central institution.
- Approaches focus on the **prevention** of social exclusion of children by establishing **early and close contact with families** in a variety of ways. In Finland and Flanders, early and close contact between the state and families is sought. In part this is done structurally through one-stop agencies or family centres. In Cyprus, social workers, together with local organisations, have the task to identify specific needs of families early on and at low thresholds.

Further important steps with regard to social exclusion and child poverty in Europe

- **Data** and scientific studies on the impact of government measures at local level against child poverty are needed in order to promote more effective national policies. For example, this may be done in the field of local “prevention chains”.
- National approaches and European strategies need to **work and act together**.
- Intensified national and European **exchange** on examples of good practices could advance the development of good policy instruments.
- Cooperation and coordination between the various **sectors** that are involved is needed to counter child poverty and social exclusion. Important are for example the administration sector, social work, education and health sectors as well as the civil society.

For the Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe

Sarah Molter and Christina Schliffka

2 Programme

Monday, 27 May 2019

9:00 Opening Speech

Petra Mackroth (Head of Directorate-General Family Affairs, German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)

Christina Schliffka and Sarah Molter (Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe)

9:30 “Children Have the Right to Protection from Poverty” – Putting the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Recommendation “Investing in Children” to Practice

Julius op de Beke (Division Disability and Inclusion, Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission)

Needs of Children and the Role of the State

Prof. Dr. Karl August Chassé (Scientific Input)

10:30 Coffee Break

11:00 Promoting the Well-Being of Children – Options for the Individual Protection of Children Through Cash Benefits and Benefits in Kind (National Inputs and Discussion)

Erich Fenninger (Volkshilfe, Austria)

Håkan Nyman, Ph.D. (Ministry for Health and Social Affairs, Sweden)

12:15 Light Lunch

13:00 Strengthen Families with Small Income and Their Children: Current Developments in Germany (National Input and Discussion)

Jörg Plewka (Head of Division Monitoring Family-related Benefits and Well-being of Families, German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)

13:30 Simplifying Access to Child and Family Benefits – Ways to Optimize Information, Counselling, and Application Processes (National Inputs and Discussion)

Prof. Eva Österbacka (Åbo Akademi University, Finland)

Lieve Krobea (Kind en Gezin, Flanders)

Phanos Kouroufexis (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, Cyprus)

15:00 Coffee Break

15:30 Where Do We Go from Here? Next Steps from the Perspective of the European Civil Society

Réka Tunyogi (Eurochild)

16:00 Final Discussion and Feedback

16:15 Closing Remarks

Johanna Wöran (EU Division, German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)

3 Tackling Child Poverty and Social Exclusion – Approaches and Experiences of State Support for Children in Europe

3.1 Opening Speech by Petra Mackroth

Petra Mackroth, Head of the Directorate-General Family Affairs at the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth¹, opens the Expert Meeting:

- *The spoken word shall be considered authoritative* -

“Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you here at the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth to the European Expert Meeting on the issue of “tackling child poverty and social exclusion”. Today, we want to discuss what the state can do to ensure that all children grow up well right from the start – regardless of whether their parents have a high or low income. We know that long-term experiences of poverty in childhood have a negative impact on the entire life cycle. We must therefore take countermeasures and invest at an early stage.

I would particularly like to thank all speakers who are going to share their knowledge and experience with us.

First of all, some information that may help in setting the frame for today’s exchange.

The majority of the 8.2 million families and their children (a total of 13.4 million) in Germany are doing well. Nevertheless, child poverty is a recurring issue – in the media, in practice, in science and in politics. Around two million children receive basic income support – and another two million children live in families that have a hard time making ends meet, despite having work. These children have fewer opportunities in terms of education and participation in our society.

This is set to change. The current government is tackling child poverty with a new package of measures, spanning across different ministries and departments.

What can alleviate child poverty and what we do:

Germany has been focusing on an impact-oriented family policy and a threefold approach to combating child poverty for a long time. The main objectives of our family policies are the economic stability of families and the well-being of children. For some years now, we have



Petra Mackroth

¹ <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/meta/en>; all stated online sources are currently accessible [28 January 2020].

been asking ourselves how effective our policies actually are. When we evaluated central family benefits in a research project that lasted several years, we found out about ways to counter child poverty more effectively and to strengthen families:

- First, effective benefits that support families in an unbureaucratic, targeted and needs-based manner,
- second, good opportunities to reconcile family and work, because gainful employment of parents is the best protection against poverty
- and third, good childcare services that support all children at an early age, independently from their parents, and strengthen their learning and participation opportunities.

Thanks to our evaluation, we know that the poverty risk of children would be about twice as high without the various social and family benefits. More importantly, we know now how effective and efficient benefits and measures are, where problems exist and where things can be improved. In recent years, we have proceeded from these observations and have further developed the system of family benefits. The latest reform of the child benefit supplement (“*Kinderzuschlag*”), which demonstrably provides efficient protection against poverty, also goes back to these research results. Mr. Plewka will tell you more about this later on.

Current debates in Germany

The discussion about how family benefits can be further improved and how they can possibly be bundled, made less bureaucratic and more accessible, continues. Many of the guests here from Germany have a share in this by helping to shape this discussion with demands, ideas and concepts.

Different models are being discussed. The debate includes questions like

- how children can be financially secured on an individual basis,
- how problems can be solved that derive from benefits being allocated in parallel,
- and how benefits can reach those who need them.

The minister underlines: it takes more than money for children to grow up well. They need early and good support. This is why we continue to invest in the expansion of childcare for infants and primary school children. And: More money in the families must not lead to parents working less or not looking for work.

In the early 2000s, we had good experiences with looking at the approaches towards family policy of our European neighbours, seeing how successful they were. This outside view has encouraged us to reflect on parental benefits and the expansion of childcare. Today, parental allowance and childcare are some of the most important and highly valued family policy instruments among parents.

We also wanted to broaden our national perspective on the issue of child protection. For example, we asked the Observatory to examine how state support for children is organised elsewhere in Europe. The paper with the results is available in the form of an expertise². This gave rise to the idea of organising an exchange in the form of this European Expert Meeting.

² https://www.beobachtungsstelle-gesellschaftspolitik.de/file/?f=889aad3a1.pdf&name=2019_KEX_Absicherung_Kinder_DE.pdf (in German).

We did not just want to read about your family policies, we wanted to exchange ideas with you, ask questions and discuss different answers. The Observatory's publication has shown that the issues of good child protection and easy access to benefits are not only debated in Germany, but also in many other EU member states.

We believe that your knowledge and experience can further enrich the discussion in Germany.

We look forward to talking to you about the questions that seem particularly important to us for the debate in Germany:

- Which models of financial benefits for children, which consist of a single benefit and support children independently from their parents, can currently be found in Europe, and what are their advantages and disadvantages?
- What kind of support is currently available in Europe regarding the education and participation of children, and what is the relationship between this support and the financial security of children?
- How can access to both types of benefits for children and families be facilitated and made as easy as possible?

I wish you and us interesting insights, discussions and new conclusions.”

3.2 Putting the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Recommendation “Investing in Children” to Practice – Keynote Speech by Julius op de Beke, European Commission



Julius op de Beke

Julius op de Beke from the division “Disability and Inclusion” at the European Commission’s Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion³ reports about the risk of poverty and social exclusion of children in Europe. He then presents current initiatives at EU level aimed at tackling child poverty and social exclusion.

About 25 percent of children in the EU were at risk of poverty in 2017. Child poverty is particularly high in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Greece, Italy and Spain. Children from single-parent families and families with more than three children, children with a migrant background and children of parents of an ethnic minority (especially Roma) are at above-average risk of poverty.

Children from vulnerable families have less chances for upward social mobility. The best way to set this right is by investing more in education, especially in early childhood education and care. This is not only important for reasons of equality and social justice: If children were to receive the necessary resources for good development, they would also be able to lead more independent lives as adults, which would benefit society as a whole. A well-developed childcare system would also

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en>

enable both parents to participate in the labour market. Currently, mothers often put their jobs on hold. According to Mr. op de Beke, those states that ensure good opportunities for reconciliation of family and work for parents also invest most in children and have the highest birth rates.

Following up on this, Mr. op de Beke takes a look at current initiatives at EU level:

- First, the European Commission has adopted its recommendation “Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage”⁴ in 2013, which all member states have pledged to follow. This recommendation is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and calls for an integrated approach and thus coordination of the various services for children and families. It requests the member states to take action in three areas: first, parents should have access to sufficient resources. This includes good access to the labour market and, where appropriate, to additional family-related benefits. Second, children must have access to high-quality childcare. In Principle, children should also be involved in decisions that affect them. The implementation of the recommendation is monitored within the framework of the European Semester.
- Adding to this, the European Pillar of Social Rights⁵ has been adopted by the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission. It contains twenty principles on equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection and social inclusion. It is supposed to be a minimum standard to bring about social reforms and upward mobility. Principle 11 explicitly addresses children and their right to high-quality and affordable childcare as well as protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds also have the right to special measures that aim to promote equal opportunities.
- At the initiative of the European Parliament, the European Commission requested a feasibility study for a so-called “child guarantee”⁶. This child guarantee is intended to ensure free access to health, education and child care, as well as ensure adequate housing and food for children. The results of the feasibility study are set to become available at the beginning of 2020.
- The European Commission has also drafted a proposal for a Council Recommendation on quality standards in early childhood education and care.⁷
- Between 2014 and 2020, the European Social Fund provides 20 billion euros in support for the social inclusion of children. According to Mr. op de Beke, this represents about 26 percent of the total expenditure of the European Social Fund. This amount is expected to increase even further in the multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027. The participation of civil society organisations and local authorities is essential to ensuring that the available funds are channelled into good projects, he adds.

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1060&langId=en>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en

⁶ More information on the child guarantee and the feasibility study can be found in [chapter 7](#) of the documentation.

⁷ Note by the Observatory: In May 2019, the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on high quality early childhood education and care systems - 2019/C 189/02 was adopted.

3.3 Needs of Children and the Role of the State – Scientific Input by Professor Karl August Chassé



Professor Karl August Chassé

Karl August Chassé, Professor Emeritus at the University of Applied Sciences Jena, focuses on the dimensions and effects of poverty in early age.

Professor Chassé first talks about the measuring of poverty and the assessment of needs. He emphasises that poverty among children and young people is not limited to insufficient income of their parents but that it is rather multidimensional and can therefore have an impact on all areas of life. Different deprivation indices try to reflect the social standard of living based on various dimensions of everyday life. These include, for instance, nutrition, housing, leisure, education, health and social relationships.

Professor Chassé explains that several studies have put more emphasis on a subjective perception of poverty. This has led to a demand for politicians to take the specific and concrete experience of poverty among children and parents seriously.

Following this, Professor Chassé presents the effects of poverty on various areas of children's lives. He underlines that the entire educational career of poor children is clearly strained. The results of the PISA studies show that the level of competences at school as compared to international standards is particularly closely linked to social origin in Germany.

Similar results can be seen with regards to the uptake of informal educational, cultural or leisure offers that are associated with costs: poor children make much less use of them.

Poor children are also disadvantaged in the area of health: psychological problems and psychosocial impairments are more frequent. Poorer children are also more likely to be overweight. In addition, the subjective health of the children is rated significantly lower.

Given these findings, Professor Chassé sums up: Policymakers as designers of social framework conditions are called upon to invest in the financial security of children and families and thus in poverty prevention. In addition, the further development of the infrastructure is crucial for children and their families in general as well as with regard to the particular needs and demands of groups affected by poverty. Fair educational opportunities are particularly important, he says. Specifically, a shift from an allocation function of schools towards an integration function should be encouraged, especially in primary schools. In fact, such needed integrated approaches do already exist at the municipal and Länder levels, for example in local "prevention chains". At the federal level, they are still lacking, though. As a potential measure at national level, Professor Chassé thus proposes the introduction of a legal entitlement to social infrastructure.

3.4 Discussion

In the subsequent discussion, the uptake and potential effects of free offers are discussed. The question arises as to whether it can be empirically proven that entirely free services would be used to a greater extent and thus have a better effect than fee-based services. Professor Chassé explains that there is no representative research that has additionally put a focus on the national level. However, given the approach of local prevention chains, there are models that suggest positive effects of free services, he argues. Yet the development of local prevention chains requires a lot of prerequisites, as the political will must be given in the municipality as well as among many relevant actors. With regard to existing research on the impacts of child poverty, it is pointed out that the AWO-ISS study⁸, among others, shows that experiences of poverty in all phases of childhood and adolescence have negative effects on later life. Above all, social exclusion at school is an important factor for the development of children and young people. Having experienced such exclusion, persons often lack the self-confidence to be successful later on in vocational trainings and working life.

Looking back at the recent elections to the European Parliament, the question is also discussed as to whether the new composition of Parliament and the filling of posts within the European Commission will have consequences for the follow-up of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Mr. op de Beke considers the new composition of the European Parliament to be an important factor for the future shaping of European social policy. He reiterates the importance of the European Pillar of Social Rights for the citizens of the European Union and calls for a further pursuit of the pre-established objectives.

4 Options for the Individual Protection of Children

4.1 Austria: The Concept of a Guaranteed Child Allowance – Erich Fenninger

Erich Fenninger, chairman of the federal board of the welfare organisation *Volkshilfe Österreich*⁹ gives a presentation on the model of a guaranteed child allowance (“*Kindergrundsicherung*”) drafted by the *Volkshilfe* Austria. According to current surveys, almost one in five children in Austria is at risk of poverty, Mr. Fenninger reports. On the basis of current child poverty research, the *Volkshilfe* has therefore developed a guaranteed child allowance. It is a model that has the potential to eliminate child poverty in Austria, he claims.

The objective of the guaranteed child allowance is to give all children in Austria the chance to participate fully. This



Erich Fenninger

⁸ <https://www.iss-ffm.de/themen/alter/projekte-1/langzeitstudie-zur-lebenssituation-und-lebenslage-artermer-kinder>.

⁹ <https://www.volkshilfe.at/>

requires financial support in various areas of life. According to Mr. Fenninger, these areas can be divided into material, social, cultural and health dimensions. The model stipulates that all children, irrespective of their parents' income, are entitled to a monthly base amount of 200 euros. This corresponds roughly to the level of benefits currently paid out, so that no child will receive less as a result of reforms than it receives at present. Children at risk of poverty could benefit from up to 625 euros per month, based on the household income of the family. From a household income of 35,000 euros upwards, only the base amount of 200 euros per child would be paid. This calculation does not include any differentiation according to age or number of children in the family. Such an individual protection of each child via the guaranteed child allowance could replace a whole set of former financial benefits, he argues. However, special benefits that address special needs, such as personal care allowances for children, should be preserved and continued. In the same vein, child support benefits would remain and be factored into the household income. Calculations by the European Centre for Welfare Policy and Social Research have shown that the cost of a guaranteed child allowance for all children would be around two billion euros, which amounts to 1.9 percent of all social expenditure in Austria. In effect, the threat of poverty for children and young people would fall from the current 18 percent to less than nine percent.

In addition to the conceptual principles of a guaranteed child allowance, Mr. Fenninger also presents the pilot project of the *Volkshilfe*, which has already implemented a guaranteed child allowance on a small scale into practice. The aim of this pilot project is to demonstrate the effects of such support. Within the framework of the pilot project, one family in each of the nine federal states is supported for two years with a guaranteed child allowance. A total of 20 children at risk of poverty thus receive such support. As a priority, families at risk of poverty were selected, such as single parents, multiple-child families or parents without their own income. In each case, a so-called "children's future council" is held, in which the family plans how they will use the allowance. The results of this consultation also form the basis for quarterly discussions, which are conducted by social workers. In addition to the central objective of reducing child poverty, *Volkshilfe* Austria also focuses on the future prospects of children and families affected by poverty. According to Mr. Fenninger, the pilot project shall therefore also show how the emotional situation of children may change due to the elimination of money worries in the family and what kind of new opportunities may open up for the children.

4.2 Sweden: Integrated Benefits to Protect Children – Dr. Håkan Nyman

Dr. Håkan Nyman from the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs¹⁰ presents the financial benefits offered to children and families as part of an integrated benefit scheme in Sweden. According to him, the most important pillars of protection for children and families are:

- universal benefits as well as the national social security system,
- additional state services and benefits in the fields of health and social services as well as in the case of special needs,
- and subsidised high-quality early childhood education and care.

¹⁰ <https://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-of-health-and-social-affairs/>



Dr. Håkan Nyman

First, Dr. Nyman discusses the universal benefits for children and families as well as the national social security system. As a universal benefit, a child benefit of around 100 euros per month and per child is being paid. If there are two legal guardians, the child benefit is paid in equal shares to both parents.

In addition, the social security system in Sweden contributes to the financial security of children and families. The system is financed through social security contributions and taxes. The most important insurance-related benefit is the parental allowance, which can be received for up to 480 days and can amount to between 25 and 70 euros per day, depending on income. In addition, if the child or caregiver is ill, working parents can be granted paid leave.

The introduction of a so-called family week, which would allow for paid leave of five days per year and parent, is also currently being discussed. Other insurance-related benefits include the pregnancy benefit and the inclusion of child-rearing periods into pension entitlements. In his remarks, Dr. Nyman also highlights the individual taxation of persons introduced in 1970 as a characteristic feature of the Swedish system.¹¹

As Dr. Nyman explains, further state benefits outside the social security system - as a second pillar for the protection of children - include education and health services for children, support for expectant mothers, counselling and support for parents as well as additional financial support for families at risk of poverty, which is provided by the municipalities. Means-tested benefits in Sweden include the housing allowance, the maintenance support as well as the disability and care allowance for disabled children.

Following this, Dr. Nyman presents the comprehensive and subsidised childcare system in Sweden, which is the third pillar of Swedish family policy: Childcare is available for all children between the ages of one and five, as is after-school care for children up to the age of twelve. Parents' contributions to childcare do not exceed 140 euros per month, and the majority of costs is covered by state subsidies.

Lastly, Dr. Nyman summarises the approaches of Swedish family policy and assesses their effects. The Swedish model aims to provide financial security for children by supporting parents, especially mothers, to be gainfully employed and at the same time providing direct financial support for children. The financial benefits for children and families aim to partly compensate for income losses during parental leave and thus to avoid child poverty. However, Sweden is also one of the OECD countries where income inequality has increased the most. Despite this, the proportion of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion is at 17 percent and thus relatively low. Children in single-parent families, children whose parents were both

¹¹ Note by the Observatory: Such an individual taxation is regarded as a key measure to ensure equality between men and women, the participation of married women in the labour market and the reconciliation of family and working life. In contrast, joint taxation of married couples favours the so-called "breadwinner model". In addition to negative incentives for women to earn a living, this form of taxation often leads to poorer social security for women in the event of divorce.

not born in Sweden, and children in large families are nevertheless at particular risk of poverty. However, it is important to note that children in Sweden are very rarely at risk of poverty and social exclusion over a period of several years, Dr. Nyman points out. In addition, the existential-material care for children is very rarely threatened. Dr. Nyman concludes by pointing out that an effective fight against child poverty must take into account the various dimensions of poverty and thus provide a number of integrated measures.

4.3 Discussion

In the ensuing discussion, details of the two approaches presented are further explained and compared with the situation in other European countries.

First, the conceptual design and practical implementation of the guaranteed child allowance presented by the *Volkshilfe* are discussed in more detail. Mr. Fenninger considers the social system in Austria to be too complex and the sheer number of different family benefits to be too high. The aim should therefore be to simplify the benefit system by providing a guaranteed child allowance, he claims. The entitlement to such a benefit should be calculated via the income tax return. However, the question of how families can be reached in this way if no tax return is submitted or if this does not happen until years later remains unanswered. The identification of eligible beneficiaries is currently still a challenge, but the *Volkshilfe* is working to find the most straightforward solutions, Mr. Fenninger says. Following on this, the proposed guaranteed child allowance is compared with the current benefits for children and families in Germany. It is explained that in Germany costs for housing are not calculated individually, but per household – and is therefore not included in the financial benefits for children. In contrast, the guaranteed child allowance of the *Volkshilfe* includes subsidies for housing costs. If the benefits for children and the separately paid costs for housing in Germany were added together, the financial support for children at risk of poverty in Germany would amount to a level similar to proposed guaranteed child allowance. Finally, there is a debate on how to ensure that financial support is used for the children and their needs. In this regard, Mr. Fenninger refers to the model of the children’s future council, in which the use of the additional financial means within the family is discussed. He thereby emphasises to include children affected by poverty in deciding on how to use the benefits.

The discussion about benefits for children and families in Sweden revolves mainly around their conceptual design. Dr. Nyman stresses the universalist approach of the Swedish model. Although means-tested benefits are repeatedly discussed in Sweden, they are generally regarded as being too complicated. Ensuring the participation of children is anchored at municipal level, which also provides targeted support for children at risk of poverty, for example in the form of free access to cultural facilities. As another important aspect for the financial security of children in Sweden, Dr. Nyman once again emphasises the labour market participation of both fathers and mothers. The individual taxation in Sweden plays an important role in this respect. The family breadwinner model and the supplementary-earner model¹² can

¹² You can find the documentation of the previous Expert Meeting of the Observatory on the topic “Farewell to the supplementary-earner model – but where to now? Aims and requirements of reconciliation policy from a gender equality perspective” here: https://www.beobachtungsstelle-gesellschaftspolitik.de/file/?f=8c147c8f1d.pdf&name=2019_Docu_Reconciliation-Equality_EN.pdf

hardly be found; labour market participation by men and women is very high. However, it can also be observed that many women suffer from a double burden and, despite good integration into the labour market, still take on a higher share of care work than men do. The discussion also shows that the Swedish approach aims to protect children from poverty through the interplay of different benefits and measures. Providing children with financial security independently from their parents is thus not the aim.

5 Current Developments in Germany: Strengthen Families with Small Income and Their Children – Jörg Plewka

Jörg Plewka, Head of the Division Monitoring Family-related Benefits and Well-being of Families at the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, explains the basic principles of state measures for the economic security of families. He presents current measures geared to strengthen families with small incomes and their children in Germany.

Of approximately 8.2 million families with children under the age of 18 living in Germany, about one million families currently receive basic income support¹³. Round about another million families live above the limit for basic income benefits, but still have small incomes.

The general assumption of German social policy is that in general everyone should pay for his or her own needs and that parents should take care of their children. However, anyone who cannot – or not entirely – earn his or her own living and that of their families should receive support from the community. The state thus relieves parents of some of the costs incurred by their parenthood by providing child benefit for all parents. In certain circumstances, families receive additional support, for example by the advance payment of maintenance for single parents, the child benefit supplement or housing benefits.

Mr. Plewka explains that the Federal Government's goal is to ensure the economic stability of families and thus also to promote the well-being of children. To this end, the parents' gainful employment shall be strengthened, as this offers the most sustainable protection against poverty in families. In addition, there are family benefits that specifically intend to improve the economic situation of families. In this regard, Mr. Plewka describes family benefits that concentrate on families with low income as a specific target group as being effective and efficient in preventing poverty. Furthermore, another aim is to better guarantee the participation and



Jörg Plewka

¹³ Note by the Observatory: In Germany, there are basic benefits for old age, reduced earning capacity and unemployment. For families and children, the means-tested, tax-financed basic provision for job-seekers (*Arbeitslosengeld II*) according to SGB II is particularly relevant. The standard rate currently stands at 424 euros for adults. Children of recipients of such unemployment benefits receive between 245 and 322 euros per month, depending on their age (as of 1 January 2019). Housing costs are also covered. The child benefit is offset against other state benefits.

educational opportunities of children. The use of childcare provisions has been shown to promote the good development of children, in particular from disadvantaged families, and to safeguard their social participation.

Following this, Mr. Plewka presents current legislative initiatives for a better protection of children in Germany. First, a gradual increase of the child benefit by 25 euros is planned until 2021. The child benefit is an important benefit for all families and contributes to a noticeable relief for them, he underlines.

Secondly, the “strong families act” (“*Starke-Familien-Gesetz*”) entered into force on 1 July 2019, increasing and fundamentally redesigning the child benefit supplement for families with low incomes. The law is intended to provide families with lower incomes with a more targeted, better and fairer support. The child supplement shall be increased to up to 185 euros per month and the circle of eligible persons shall be extended. In particular, single parents who have not been reached by the child supplement because they received other benefits will get better support in the future. Those who work more should also have more money available in the future – therefore, earned income would be deducted from the child supplement to a lesser extent than before. The upper income limit, which had led to the sudden loss of support as soon as parents had just a little more income, would be abolished, too. In this way, families will receive more continuous and thus more reliable support. In addition, the effort of applying for cash benefits for low-income families shall be reduced and the application for the child supplement as an additional benefit for low-income families shall be simplified. In addition, the law on high-quality childcare (“*Gute-Kita-Gesetz*”) now also allows all recipients of the child supplement to use day care centres free of charge. This shall strengthen the participation of children from families with low incomes.

By improving education and participation services (“*Bildungs- und Teilhabepaket*”), the strong families act also aims to create fairer opportunities for children from low-income families in childcare and schools. The improved services and benefits shall offer children and young people more opportunities to participate in educational and support programmes at school and in the social and cultural spheres. This could include memberships in sports clubs, participating in school trips or receiving learning assistance. In addition, support for personal school needs shall be increased from 100 euros to 150 euros; and lunch in school, day care and child day care as well as public transport to school shall be free of charge for children in families who receive basic security, child allowance or housing benefits. In the future, learning assistance will also be provided if the promotion to the next grade is not at imminent risk.

6 Simplifying Access to Child and Family Benefits

6.1 Finland: Coupling of State Benefits - Professor Eva Österbacka

Professor Eva Österbacka, senior researcher at Åbo Akademi¹⁴ in Turku, presents benefits for children and families in Finland. The Finnish system is based on a series of universal services to which all residents are entitled. Children and families have a range of financial benefits and

¹⁴ <https://www.abo.fi/en>

services at their disposal. For example, mothers receive a maternity package with a first baby kit or 170 euros in cash at birth. Child benefit amounts to 95 euros per month for the first child and up to 173 euros from the fifth child onwards. Parents can also make use of paid parental leave. The benefit can either be paid proportionately according to income or as a flat-rate benefit of 27 euros per day. Child day care is made available in the municipalities. There is a legal entitlement to public childcare. For children under the age of three, a specific care allowance can also be paid if they are cared for at home. Further financial support is available in the event of illness and for children with disabilities or special care needs.



Professor Eva Österbacka

Professor Österbacka then introduces the Finnish social security institute *Kela*¹⁵, which administers the majority of social benefit services in Finland. Applications to *Kela* can be submitted online, via application forms or on-site at *Kela*'s service centres. *Kela*'s aim is to provide preventive, effective and satisfactory services to all insured persons, Professor Österbacka explains. Currently, the digitalisation of services is a high priority.

Another important building block for the prevention of child poverty in Finland is preventive health care. Municipalities are obliged to provide health services free of charge. Maternity clinics, for example, advise on all questions relating to pregnancy and ensure good care for mother and child. They also confirm the pregnancy to *Kela*, which is a prerequisite for applying for the maternity package and the parental allowance. Children's clinics accompany and support the physical, mental and social development of children up until school enrolment. At least nine visits to the children's hospital are intended for the first year of a child's life, plus at least one visit per year after the first birthday. Moreover, public schools also provide part of the health care for schoolchildren, in addition to basic education: Every school has a doctor and a nurse.

Finally, Professor Österbacka reflects on whether universal support for children and families is adequate in Finland. Compared to the rest of Europe, children in Finland are doing well, she notes. The take-up of state benefits is very high, on the one hand due to the universalistic approach and on the other hand due to the selective linking of different benefits. Some developments, however, will require additional intervention by the welfare state. This is particularly true in the case of mental illness, broken family relationships or when parents are strongly burdened by their work. More generally, poverty is also on the rise in Finland. An increasing number of children is growing up outside of their own family and the proportion of young people and young adults who are not in school, work or vocational training is relatively high. Professor Österbacka therefore concludes that children from families at risk of poverty need special support that goes beyond a universal approach of preventive health care and transfer payments.

¹⁵ <https://www.kela.fi/web/en>

The OECD also advises Finland to improve the transition from school to work and to further increase support for young people.

6.2 Flanders: Low-threshold Support from One Single Source - Lieve Krobea

Lieve Krobea is advisor at the agency *Kind en Gezin* (Child and Family)¹⁶ of the Flemish government. This agency is responsible for supporting families, youth welfare and development, childcare as well as adoption in Flanders. Mrs. Krobea presents the Flemish family centres (*"Huis van het Kind"*)¹⁷ and the newly introduced "growth package" (*"Groeipakket"*) in Flanders.

The Flemish family centres bring together various offers in the field of preventive support for families. These offers follow the principle of "progressive universalism". This means that basic services are offered to every child and every family. If children and families have special needs, more support is provided accordingly. However, the family centres rely on the cooperation of many organisations offering multidisciplinary, integrated and tailor-made assistance to support expectant parents, families with children and young people up to the age of 24. Services and benefits for families in the support system are too fragmented, Mrs. Krobea says. This makes the visibility and accessibility of these benefits more difficult. In addition to this, families often receive support from different organisations at the same time. Overall, this could lead to families losing orientation and/or motivation to seek support. Nonetheless, family centres offer the possibility of matching existing counselling and support services with the real needs of families. When designing the services, it is thus also important to involve children and families.

Mrs. Krobea stresses that it is crucial for the family centres to concentrate on the following questions: Who has access to the services and benefits that are currently available? Are there any target groups who are currently unable to make use of the offers?

Moreover, family centres also provide outreach counselling and thus approach families, especially socially disadvantaged families. In order to reach these families in vulnerable situations, it is important to respect the diversity of families, she adds. Furthermore, it is important that the offers do not have a stigmatising effect on those families. This also includes taking a problem-centred approach only when necessary. Mrs. Krobea also emphasises that it is helpful to establish contact with families as early as possible, ideally already during pregnancy.

In general, integrated approaches to supporting children and families are internationally regarded as good practice to combat child poverty. Family centres alone cannot be the answer



Lieve Krobea

¹⁶ <https://www.kindengezin.be/algemeen/english-pages.jsp>

¹⁷ <http://www.huizenvanhetkind.be/hk/>

to child poverty, but they do help to strengthen and empower families and children. By inter-linking offers, the family centres can better meet the needs of families and in particular support disadvantaged families.

Finally, Mrs. Krobea talks about the so-called “Growth Package” (“Groeipakket”), which was introduced in Flanders in 2019 and has replaced the previous family benefits. Under this scheme, each child receives a one-off payment at birth as well as an age-independent child benefit, an age-related school bonus and childcare allowances. The child benefit is paid automatically without the need to apply. Families with special needs can receive additional benefits, such as social allowances, allowances for foster children or children with disabilities and additional school allowances.

6.3 Cyprus: Central Applications for State Benefits – Phanos Kouroufexis



Phanos Kouroufexis

Phanos Kouroufexis works at the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance¹⁸ in Cyprus and demonstrates how the access to benefits for children and families shall be facilitated in Cyprus. To this end, Mr. Kouroufexis first presents the various state benefits for children and families. Financial benefits are provided universally in the form of parental benefits, a one-off payment at the birth of a child as well as allowances in case of disabilities. In addition, there is the possibility of receiving child benefit, support for single parents and a subsidy for childcare, depending on an assessment of the actual needs. Mr. Kouroufexis stresses that the eligibility criteria are set at a level where many families can expect to profit from the child benefit. Therefore, the child benefit could be described as an almost universal benefit. In addition, children and families can profit

from further benefits. Examples include government-subsidised childcare and, if necessary, an initial supply kit for new-borns, free use of local public transport and the provision of school materials.

Mr. Kouroufexis then introduces the “Citizen Service Centres”, which are the central point of contact for citizens in Cyprus for 70 state services – from applying for an identity card to questions relating to pensions. The 14 Citizen Service Centres are distributed throughout Cyprus in such a way that they are easily accessible for all citizens, he says. One can apply to all of the above-mentioned financial benefits for children and families at these centres as well. Moreover, the employees can answer the applicants’ questions. In addition, a central authority helpline provides information on the processing status of the request and on any questions the applicants may have. The opening hours are adapted to the needs of the citizens, and satisfaction with the Citizen Service Centres is very high, Mr. Kouroufexis underlines. Over the coming years, the objective is to digitalise the entire application process so that applications

¹⁸ http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/mlsi.nsf/index_en/index_en?OpenDocument

can be completed either online or with the help of the Citizen Service Centre staff on site. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance hopes that this will significantly speed up the processing of applications. This centralisation of services first of all aims to simplify the application processes. Secondly, however, their positioning within the Citizen Service Centre also prevents stigmatisation, as all citizens use the centres for various purposes.

In addition, the programme “Social Service Officers in the Neighbourhood” has been introduced. The Social Service Officers are responsible, together with municipalities and local organisations, for contacting households that may need support, thus establishing personal contact. The backdrop to this programme is the aspiration of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance to establish close contact with all citizens and in particular with households at risk of poverty.

6.4 Discussion

In particular, the following discussion focuses on the connection between infrastructure and monetary benefits as well as prevention chains for the long-term support of children and families. Various options to simplify access to services are discussed, too.

Regarding Finland, professor Österbacka first explains which measures are taken by the state to ensure that as many families as possible make use of universal family benefits. In Finland, establishing contact with the parents starts before the birth: Even though prenatal examinations are not obligatory, almost all mothers make use of them. Nurses are thus in contact with the parents and recognise early on if families need help. Regular and early contact is a decisive factor in ensuring that parents have confidence in the state support system, Professor Österbacka says. She sees a challenge for doctors and nurses in the fact that experiences in cooperation with families can currently not be exchanged due to their confidentiality obligation. With regard to the social insurance institution *Kela*, Professor Österbacka reports that citizens' satisfaction is generally very high. It is an institution that has existed for a very long time and which has garnered a lot of trust. Only in rare individual cases, dissatisfaction may arise due to long processing times for applications.

For the region of Flanders, Mrs. Krobea stresses the importance that is given to prevention chains in the fight against child poverty and social exclusion. Currently, the Flemish agency *Kind en Gezin* is in contact with 96 percent of families at the time of birth. By the time the children go to school, contact is still maintained with 75 percent of the families. *Kind en Gezin* strives to further increase and intensify contact with the families. Mrs. Krobea sees one challenge in the conceptual design and orientation of the family centres. In this regard, it is important to find the right balance between fixed requirements for all family centres and the self-administration of each individual family centre, she says.

Looking at the Citizen Service Centres in Cyprus, Mr. Kouroufexis explains how they strive to simplify access to services. He underlines once again that Cyprus has consciously decided to centralise the application for many citizen services in order to avoid stigmatisation due to the mere application for benefits. The employees of the Citizen Service Centres are well trained and can provide orientation to the citizens. However, it is not the aim to be able to answer every technical question. To this end, requests and applications are forwarded to specialist

teams. In this regard, he emphasises that citizens have a right to have their questions answered by a specialist within 48 hours. The citizens are very satisfied with this procedure, he adds. Moreover, the Citizen Service Centres in Cyprus are planning to make sure that most applications can soon be submitted online, as is already the case in Finland.

7 Where Do We Go from Here? Next Steps from the Perspective of the European Civil Society – Réka Tunyogi



Réka Tunyogi

Réka Tunyogi, Head of Advocacy at the civil society organisation Eurochild¹⁹, first presents Eurochild as an organisation representing children at European level. Stakeholders from civil society, politics and science from a total of 34 European countries are among the members of the network. Eurochild's core concerns are to put an end to child poverty and social exclusion, to abolish the placement of children in institutional care and to achieve greater respect for children's rights in political discourse.

Mrs. Tunyogi points out that child poverty and social exclusion are persistent problems in Europe, although all EU member states have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to Mrs. Tunyogi, European countries struggle with how to use scarce public resources to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Many countries have cut their funding for education, health and social services, thus exacerbating child poverty and social inequalities. Moreover, no single state effectively monitors financial expenditure on children and its impact, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Eurochild considers poverty to be multidimensional. Child poverty is therefore manifested not only in a lack of financial resources, but also, for example, in poor housing conditions and lack of access to high-quality education, care and health services. In this way, poverty denies children basic participation in everyday life.

These complex challenges make an integrated approach necessary, Mrs. Tunyogi points out. She stresses that children and families must not be seen as mere recipients of support, but as stakeholders, and thus be involved in decision-making processes. On this basis, Mrs. Tunyogi presents options for action at European and national level. The European Commission's recommendation "Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage", adopted in 2013, is a helpful step towards combating child poverty, she says. The recommendation aims to guide member states in their policymaking for the welfare of children. It provides an integrated approach covering both financial and infrastructural aspects as well as the participation of children. According to Mrs. Tunyogi, it remains to be seen what level of significance will be attached to child poverty in the work of the newly constituted European Commission and the

¹⁹ <https://www.eurochild.org/>

newly elected European Parliament. In any case, it would be desirable to implement the recommendation “Investing in Children” by means of state-of-the-art measures. Within the European Semester, there are possibilities to address child poverty, too. The so-called Social Scoreboard²⁰ reviews the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in the individual member states and thus also the demands set out in Principle 11 on child poverty. According to Eurochild, greater importance should be attached to the social dimension. Mrs. Tunyogi draws attention to the fact that the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) within the framework of the forthcoming multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 contains the fight against child poverty as an explicit objective.

However, in order for the support at European level to be effective, national strategies for poverty reduction and social inclusion are also needed. These national strategies must be comprehensive and contain concrete implementation measures, Mrs. Tunyogi argues. The criterion of comprehensive strategies and approaches thus applies at both national and European level. This also includes interdisciplinary cooperation between the various sectors such as education, health, social services and housing. Strategies and investments should furthermore be thought from a children’s perspective, be evidence-based, fill gaps in existing support schemes, be implemented by professionals and promote the principle of progressive universalism.

Finally, Mrs. Tunyogi turns to the planned child guarantee at EU level. As an advocacy group for children’s interests, Eurochild is also involved in the work for a preparatory feasibility study. This study is currently examining the potential and feasibility of the planned child guarantee in the EU member states. Within the framework of the child guarantee, access to free health care, free education, free care facilities, decent housing and adequate nutrition in the member states shall be ensured. The feasibility study first explores how this can be implemented for four target groups of particularly vulnerable children. These include children living in precarious family situations, children of recent migrants and refugees, children residing in institutions and children with disabilities. First results will be presented at the beginning of 2020. With regard to financing, the European Parliament has voted to make 5.9 billion euros available for the planned child guarantee. This will now be discussed in the interinstitutional negotiations on the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027.

7.1 Discussion

Following the presentation, questions are raised regarding the feasibility study for the child guarantee. Mrs. Tunyogi explains the elaborate design of the study: in accordance with the tender issued by the European Commission, 28 country reports are prepared as well as five reports on the above-mentioned services for children, one report each on the four target groups and another eight case studies with examples of good practice. In addition, four workshops will be held on the target groups examined. Last but not least, an inception, an intermediary and a final report will be written, and a closing event will be organised. Further information on the

²⁰ Note by the Observatory: The Social Scoreboard tracks developments and progress in the member states in areas such as equal opportunities, social protection and inclusion. The results of the Social Scoreboard are also incorporated into the European Semester for economic policy coordination.

methodological structure of the feasibility study can be found in the inception report of the feasibility study and on the website of the European Commission.²¹

Furthermore, Mrs. Tunyogi explains the selection and definition of the four target groups that are examined in the feasibility study. In fact, the target groups had already been defined in the tender for the study. Experts from the consortium carrying out the feasibility study then undertook the exact operationalisation.

Another question relates to Eurochild's approach of directly incorporating children's perspectives. Mrs. Tunyogi explains that Eurochild is pursuing this approach mainly in two other projects: Together with UNICEF, Eurochild is conducting a survey in which children and young people are asked about their views on topics such as family, school, society and Europe. Another project was a recently organised children's summit on the involvement of children and young people in European decision-making processes.

8 Final Discussion and Feedback

In the concluding discussion round, the participants have the opportunity to gather impressions, interesting aspects and open questions. In fact, the large number of different issues raised reflects the complexity of the topic. Central aspects of the discussion and feedback are briefly listed below.

- According to the debate, particularly important aspects in the fight against child poverty and social exclusion are the provision of affordable childcare as well as good support for single parents.

The participants see the following aspects as central challenges in tackling child poverty and social exclusion:

- Development of effective, pan-European approaches
- Tackling the non-take-up of benefits; in particular reaching children and families affected by hidden poverty
- Conflict between granting benefits and incentives to foster participation in the labour market
- Finding and implementing administrative solutions for benefits from one source
- Issues regarding the implementation of a guaranteed child allowance (potential taxation might be a problem)



²¹ More information as well as the inception report of the feasibility study can be found here: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en>.

- Linkage of legal systems and encouraging exchange (especially between public authorities) are needed, for example with regard to tax benefits, social services, participation benefits, child and youth welfare
- Further development of political practice, dependent on empirical studies and the evaluation of model projects
- Development of equal support services in all regions

The participants raise the following, still unanswered questions:

- How can access to support for families be simplified further?
- What role do gender aspects play in child poverty?
- How can a solid data basis for “effective policies” be created?
- How can stigmatising effects of the mere receipt of benefits be avoided?
- How can multi-layered systems of family-related benefits be managed?
- How can non-nationals also profit from universal benefits?
- What is the relationship between labour market developments and child poverty?

The participants cite - among other things - the following aspects of the Expert Meeting as particularly interesting:

- Multitude of perspectives
- Involvement of many government representatives
- Overview of different systems and “cultures” of how children and families can be supported
- Acknowledging the need to provide a variety of services to children and parents in order to respond to the variety of different life situations
- Perception that benefits for people at risk of poverty are (partially) of lower quality than universal benefits (*Services for the poor = poor services?*)
- Citizen Service Centres in Cyprus providing easier access to benefits
- Presentation of the approach of local prevention chains as well as the nationwide implementation of prevention chains via family centres in Flanders
- Pilot project of the *Volkshilfe* on a guaranteed child allowance
- Engagement and European strategy of Eurochild
- Presentation of the planned child guarantee at EU level

In her closing remarks, Mrs. Wöran policy officer at the EU Division of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth thanks all participants for the intensive exchange.

She also expresses sincere thanks to the speakers from the different European countries for their participation and contributions.



Johanna Wöran

9 List of Participants

Liv Assmann	Head of Division General Policy Issues in the Directorate-General Children and Youth, German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
Dennis Becker	Research Officer, University of Hamburg
Dr. Christina Boll	Head of Department Families and Family Policies, German Youth Institute (DJI)
Marlon Brandt	Project Manager, Programme Effective Investments in Education, Bertelsmann Foundation
Prof. Dr. Karl August Chassé	Professor Emeritus, Department of Social Work, University of Applied Sciences Jena
Florian Dähne	Policy Officer Youth and Politics / Anti-Discrimination, Friedrich Ebert Foundation
Matthias Dantlgraber	Managing Director, Family Federation of Catholics (FDK)
Jörg Deml	Head of Division Prosperity Measurement, Poverty and Wealth Issues, German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Erich Fenninger	Managing Director, Volkshilfe, Austria
Andreas Heimer	Director, Prognos AG
Miriam Hoheisel	Managing Director, Federal Association of Single Mothers and Fathers (VAMV)
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Phanos Kouroufexis	Minister's Associate, Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, Cyprus
Lieve Krobea	Policy Advisor, Kind en Gezin, Flanders
Dr. Mara Kuhl	Head of Units "Europe" and "Gender Equality", Institute for Social Work and Social Education (ISS e.V.)

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Håkan Nyman, Ph.D.	Senior Advisor, Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
Nina Ohlmeier	Head of Unit Political Communication, German Children's Fund
Julius op de Beke	Policy Officer, Unit Disability and Inclusion, Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission
Prof. Eva Österbacka	Senior Researcher, Åbo Akademi University
Valentin Persau	Policy Officer for Social Policy, German Workers' Welfare Association (AWO)
Jörg Plewka	Head of Division Monitoring Family-Related Benefits, Well-being of Families, German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
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Marie Wittenius	Research Officer, Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe, Institute for Social Work and Social Education
Johanna Wöran	Policy Officer EU Division, German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

10 Presentations

- I. Needs of Children and the Role of the State – Scientific Input by Professor Karl August Chassé (in German)
- II. Austria: Abolishing Child Poverty. From Vision to Action – Erich Fenninger (in German)
- III. Sweden: Promoting the Well-Being of Children in Sweden – Options for the Individual Protection of Children Through Cash Benefits and Benefits in Kind – Dr. Håkan Nyman
- IV. Germany: Strengthen Families with Small Income and Their Children: Current Developments in Germany – Jörg Plewka (in German)
- V. Finland: Simplifying Access to Child and Family Benefits – The Finnish Case – Professor Eva Österbacka
- VI. Flanders: Family Centres and the Growth Package in Flanders. An Approach of State Support for Children and Families in Flanders – Lieve Krobea
- VII. Cyprus: Tackling Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Cyprus – Phanos Kouroufexis
- VIII. Where Do We Go from Here? Next Steps from the Perspective of European Civil Society – Réka Tunyogi

Kinderarmut, ihre Folgen, und Möglichkeiten des Staates

Vortrag Berlin 27. 5. 2019 Prof. Dr. Karl August Chassé

- Kinderarmut (Median) 19,7%
- Jugendliche (18 – 25 J.) 25,5%
- Mindestsicherung Sozialgeld 15,3% (Ost 23,5%)
- Minimum 7% Bayern, Maximum 32,9% Berlin (kleinregional höher)

Quelle: Paritätischer 2017, S. 20, 10. Basis Mikrozensus

- Quelle: Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (Gesamtverband) 2017: Armutsbericht 2017, S. 12, Graphik 2, online verfügbar unter: <https://www.der-paritaetische.de/schwerpunkt/armutsbericht/> (31.05.2019)

Lebenslagekonzept für Kinder



Hoher Anteil Transferbezug in HzE

- Quelle: Monitor Hilfen zur Erziehung 2018, Abb. 3.2; S. 21, online verfügbar unter: http://hzemonitor.akjstat.tu-dortmund.de/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Monitor_Hilfen_zur_Erziehung_2018.pdf (31.05.2019)

HZE erreichen nur einen Teil der Kinder

- **Armutsforschung 3 Typen (grob):**
 - Ausgleich durch Netzwerkressourcen
 - Kinder mit Benachteiligungen in einzelnen Lebenslagebereichen
 - Mehrfach benachteiligte Kinder (HZE)



Jugendhilfe muss weit über HZE hinausreichen
Rechtsanspruch auf Infrastruktur für alle Kinder
Kinderrecht auf Ganztagschule (aber sozialpäd.)?
Kommunale Präventionsketten als
sozialpädagogische Bewältigungsmilieus aufbauen

Soziale Arbeit?

- Ausbau sozialer Infrastruktur vor allem im Bereich
 - Kindertagesbetreuung (Krippe, Kindergarten),
 - Ganztagschule sowie eines
 - interdisziplinären Kooperationsnetzwerks von Kinderschutz und den "Frühen Hilfen".

Die ehemals selbstverständliche Elternschaft ist zu einer Fähigkeit, sie als Leistung hervorzubringen, umgestellt

Evaluation

- Empirisch scheint die forcierte Bildungsanstrengung der Jugendhilfe bislang nicht zur Verminderung sozialer Ungleichheit und Benachteiligung beigetragen zu haben (vgl. 14. und 15. KJB; Nubbek-Studie), Armut und Kinderarmut steigen weiterhin (leicht) an; all dies sind ungeklärte Probleme.

Bedarfe?

- Bedarfe sowohl an sozialer Infrastruktur wie an Hilfen zur Erziehung nehmen aus nachvollziehbaren Gründen zu.
- Dunkelziffer vermutlich hoch.
- Fachliche Entwicklung geeigneter Infrastrukturen (z.B. kommunale Bildungslandschaften, Ganztagschule, Schulsozialarbeit, frühe Hilfen, Präventionsketten) hat begonnen, ist regional sehr unterschiedlich und bleibt in ihrer Reichweite hinter den komplexer gewordenen Anforderungen an Soziale Arbeit zurück.

MEHR ALS HILFE. VERÄNDERUNG

KINDERARMUT ABSCHAFFEN

VON DER VISION ZUM HANDELN

ARMUT AUS KINDPERSPEKTIVE

„Wenn ich mir was kaufen will, bin ich erst einmal traurig. Und irgendwie verstehe ich es aber auch, weil wir brauchen das Geld für etwas anderes, für Lebensmittel [...] aber wenn ich etwas dringend brauch, zum Beispiel Gewand oder etwas für die Schule, dann nehme ich mein Taschengeld und zahle es.“

(Klara)

„Wenn Mama dann die Miete nicht bezahlen kann, dann hab ich immer Angst, dass wir rausfliegen hier.“

(Sophie)

„In der Schule ist es peinlich zu sagen – „Wir haben kein Geld“ - und das noch vor der ganzen Klasse.“

(Chantal)

KINDERARMUT IN ÖSTERREICH

BEKLEMMENDE DATEN & FAKTEN (QUELLE: EU-SILC 2018)

Jedes armutsbetroffene Kind ist eines zu viel!

14,4%

der Bevölkerung in Österreich sind armutsgefährdet.

Das entspricht rund

1,245

Millionen Menschen. Frauen sind häufiger betroffen als Männer.

Rund **18%**

der in Österreich lebenden Kinder und Jugendlichen bis 19 Jahre sind armutsgefährdet.

Das entspricht fast jedem

5. Kind in Österreich

324.000 Kinder

sind von Armut betroffen. Armut verbreitet sich unter Kindern und Jugendlichen stärker als in anderen sozialen Gruppen

2

KINDERARMUT IN ÖSTERREICH

BEKLEMMENDE DATEN & FAKTEN (QUELLE: EU-SILC 2018)

Kinderarmut bedeutet..

...in überbelegten und feuchten **Wohnungen** leben

...selten oder nie auf **Urlaub** zu fahren

...keine FreundInnen zu sich **einladen** zu können

...das Taschengeld für die Haushaltsausgaben **sparen.**

EINFACH NICHT ALLE CHANCEN IM LEBEN ZU HABEN!

3

DIE DIMENSIONEN VON KINDERARMUT

MATERIELLE VERSORGUNG

ARTIKEL 27

Erkennt das Recht jedes Kindes auf einen seiner körperlichen, geistigen, seelischen, sittlichen und sozialen Entwicklung angemessenen Lebensstandard an.

Wohnen, Essen, Kleidung

- Finanzielle Absicherung und angemessener Lebensstandard
- 300 Euro

Forderungen:

- Mindestlohn und Mindeststandards
- Ausbau Wohnbau, Delogierungsprävention
- Gesunde Ernährung in Bildungseinrichtungen

4

DIE DIMENSIONEN VON KINDERARMUT

BILDUNG

ARTIKEL 28

Erkennt das Recht jedes Kindes auf Bildung sowie dessen Verwirklichung auf Grundlage der Chancengleichheit an.

Bildungschancen

- Gelingendes Leben und Einwirkungsmöglichkeiten
- 200 Euro

Forderungen:

- Inklusives Bildungssystem
- Kostenfreie Betreuungsplätze
- Kostenfreiheit und Förderung in der Schule

5

DIE DIMENSIONEN VON KINDERARMUT

SOZIALE TEILHABE

ARTIKEL 31

Erkennt das Recht jedes Kindes auf Ruhe und Freizeit an, auf Spiel und altersgemäße aktive Erholung sowie auf freie Teilnahme am kulturellen und künstlerischen Leben.

Soziale Kontakte/Freizeit

- Soziale Netzwerke, Freizeitaktivitäten
- 95 Euro

Forderungen:

- Beratungsangebote
- Konsumfreier Erholungs- und Spielraum
- Offene Jugendarbeit und Schulsozialarbeit

6

DIE DIMENSIONEN VON KINDERARMUT

GESUNDHEIT

ARTIKEL 24

Erkennt das Recht jedes Kindes auf das erreichbare Höchstmaß an Gesundheit an.

Gesundheitliche Entwicklung

- Physischer und psychischer Gesundheitszustand, körperliche Entwicklung
- 30 Euro

Forderungen:

- Gesundheitsversorgung und -vorsorge
- Stärkung des Selbstbewusstseins und Selbstwirksamkeit
- Kostenfreie medizinische Behelfe und Mitbetreuung der Eltern

7

KINDERGRUNDSICHERUNG

KINDERGRUNDSICHERUNG

LEISTUNGEN

In die Kindergrundsicherung sollen folgende **aktuelle Leistungen** aufgehen:

- Familienbeihilfe (inkl. Mehrkindzuschlägen und Geschwisterstaffelung)
- Kinderabsetzbetrag
- Familienbonus

Spezialisierte Leistungen wie

- Erhöhte Familienbeihilfe
- Pflegegeld für Kinder

sollen nicht in der KGS aufgehen, weil sie für einen bestimmten Mehraufwand gewährt werden.

- Unterhaltsleistungen bleiben bestehen und werden im Haushaltseinkommen miteinbezogen.

KINDERGRUNDSICHERUNG

DAS MODELL DER VOLKSHILFE

12x jährlich EUR 200
bis zum 18. Lebensjahr

+ ohne Staffelung nach Alter oder Anzahl der Kinder

Max. 425 EUR für
armutsgefährdete Kinder

+ Benachteiligungen in den Dimensionen materielle Versorgung, Bildung, Soziales und Gesundheit ausgleichen.

Derzeitige Leistungen
durch Kindergrundsicherung
ersetzen

Die Bedürfnisse des einzelnen Kindes werden in den Mittelpunkt gestellt.

ES IST LEISTBAR

Kinderarmut abschaffen kostet pro Jahr 2,0 Mrd. EUR, das sind nur 1,9% aller Sozialausgaben

10

KINDERARMUT ABSCHAFFEN

WIR NEHMEN DIE ZUKUNFT VORWEG



11

KINDERARMUT ABSCHAFFEN

DIE UMSETZUNG

- 1 Ersterhebung** + **Bedürfnisse und Gefühlslagen** der Kinder
- 2 Festlegung Gesamtleistung** + Abzüglich bestehender Förderungen
- 3 Auszahlung 12x jährlich** + **Monatlich sollen EUR 625** pro Kind zur Verfügung stehen.
- 4 Sozialarbeiterische Begleitung** + Methoden: Familienkonferenzen und Haushaltsbuch
- 5 Sozialwissenschaftliche Erforschung** + **Wirkung der Auszahlung**

12

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

KINDERARMUT ABSCHAFFEN - ES IST MACHBAR

- **Vorstellung Modell Kindergrundsicherung**
Abschaffung von Kinderarmut mit Hilfe von staatlicher Leistung.
- **Wir nehmen die Zukunft vorweg:**
Auszahlung an 20 armutsbetroffene Kinder
Sozialarbeiterische Begleitung und Forschung
- **Volkshilfe steht für „Kinderarmut abschaffen“** Wir sammeln Geld, um weitere Kinder nachhaltig finanziell unterstützen zu können.
- Alle diese Maßnahmen tragen dazu bei, eine **gesellschaftliche Mehrheit** für die Einführung einer staatlichen Leistung – **der Kindergrundsicherung** – zu erreichen.

13

Promoting the Well-Being of Children in Sweden – Options for the Individual Protection of Children Through Cash Benefits and Benefits in Kind

Tackling Child Poverty and Social Exclusion – Approaches and Experiences of
State Support for Children in Europe”

European Expert Meeting, Bering 27 May 2019

Håkan Nyman
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs



Outline

1. Swedish family policies, directly or indirectly, affecting the financial situation of children
2. Their effects on child poverty and social exclusion
3. The Swedish context in relation to child poverty



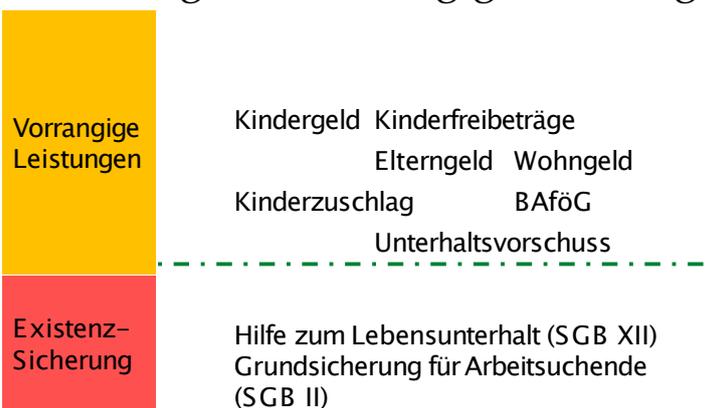
Swedish family policy

- **The national social insurance system** provides financial security for families with children. Based on the *individual* and is financed through a combination of social security contributions and taxes.
- **Subsidised universal child care services** and high-quality day care system. Provided at local level but with state grants.
- **Other public services** such as care for expectant mothers, healthcare, dentalcare, medicine, education, parental advice and support and social welfare for those with additional financial needs, including child specific items – the latter administrated by the municipals.



Familien mit kleinen Einkommen und ihre Kinder stärken: aktuelle Entwicklungen in Deutschland

Grundsicherung und vorrangige Leistungen



Familien mit kleinen Einkommen benötigen Unterstützung

- Es gibt in Deutschland ca. **8,2 Mio. Familien** mit rund 13,4 Mio. minderjährigen Kindern.
 - Rund **1 Mio. Familien** mit rund 2 Mio. Kindern erhalten Leistungen der Grundsicherung.
 - Rund **1 Mio. Familien** mit rund 2 Mio. Kindern haben **kleine Einkommen** und leben **oberhalb des SGB II**.
- Wirtschaftlich enge Verhältnisse belasten häufig den **Familienalltag** und die Lebensperspektiven von Eltern und Kindern.

2

Deutschland spürbar stärker machen.
Starke Familien für ein stärkeres Land.

Ansatzpunkte zur Absicherung von Kindern

- wirtschaftliche Stabilität der Familie sichern und Wohlergehen der Kinder fördern -

- **Erwerbstätigkeit der Eltern stärken**
Erwerbstätigkeit bietet den nachhaltigsten Schutz vor Familienarmut.
- **Finanzielle Familienleistungen gezielt verbessern**
Wirksam und effizient sind Familienleistungen, die sich auf Familien mit geringen Einkommen konzentrieren.
- **Bessere Teilhabe und Bildungschancen von Kindern gewährleisten**
Kinderbetreuung fördert die gute Entwicklung der Kinder, sichert ihnen soziale Teilhabe und verringert die Folgen erlebter Armutsrisiken. Das Bildungs- und Teilhabepaket stärkt das Mitmachen in der Gemeinschaft.

3

Deutschland spürbar stärker machen.
Starke Familien für ein stärkeres Land.

Maßnahmen der Bundesregierung für starke Familien und gegen Kinderarmut in Deutschland



4

Deutschland spürbar stärker machen.
Starke Familien für ein stärkeres Land.

Kindergeld

Eine starke Leistung für alle Familien.

Von allen Familien **hoch geschätzt**.

Spürbare Entlastung vor allem für junge Familien und Mehrkindfamilien.

Anhebung um 25 Euro pro Kind in zwei Schritten.

	2018	2019	2021
1. Kind	194 €	+10 €	+15 €
2. Kind	194 €	+10 €	+15 €
3. Kind	200 €	+10 €	+15 €
4. und weitere Kinder	225 €	+10 €	+15 €

5

Deutschland spürbar stärker machen.
Starke Familien für ein stärkeres Land.

Ziele des Starke-Familien-Gesetzes

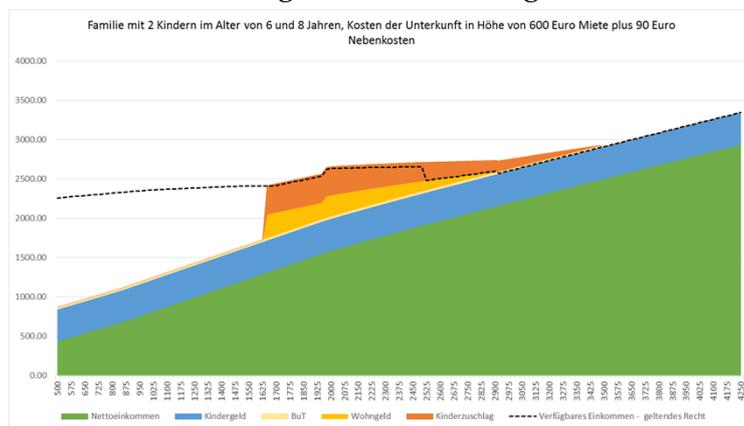
- **Mehr Familien mit kleinen Einkommen stärken.**
- **Mehr Gerechtigkeit für Eltern schaffen :** Wer mehr arbeitet, wird mehr in der Tasche haben. Wer alleine erzieht, wird besser unterstützt.
- **Weniger Aufwand bei der Beantragung von Geldleistungen für die Familien.**
- **Bessere Chancen für Kinder in der Kita und in der Schule, damit es jedes Kind packt.**



6

Deutschland spürbar stärker machen.
Starke Familien für ein stärkeres Land.

Der Kinderzuschlag: heute und morgen



7

Deutschland spürbar stärker machen.
Starke Familien für ein stärkeres Land.

Verbesserung der Bildungs- und Teilhabeleistungen *für Kinder in Familien mit Grundsicherung, Kinderzuschlag oder Wohngeld*

1. **Erhöhung des Schulbedarfspakets** von 100 € auf 150 €
2. **Erhöhung Teilhabebetrag** von 10 € auf 15 €
3. **Kostenlose ÖPNV-Fahrkarte** für Schülerinnen und Schüler
4. **Kostenloses warmes Mittagessen** in Schule, Kita und Kindertagespflege
5. **Lernförderung** auch für Schülerinnen und Schüler, die nicht versetzungsgefährdet sind



8

Deutschland spürbar stärker machen.
Starke Familien für ein stärkeres Land.

Kontakt

Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend
Referat 202
Monitoring Familienbezogene Leistungen,
Wohlergehen von Familien

Ansprechpartner
Herr Jörg Plewka
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Frauen und Jugend



9

Deutschland spürbar stärker machen.
Starke Familien für ein stärkeres Land.

Simplifying Access to Child and Child Family Benefits - The Finnish Case

Tackling Child Poverty and Social Exclusion
Berlin, May 27

Eva Österbacka
Professor in Economics at Åbo Akademi University

Families and Children in the Finnish Welfare State

- Universal benefits and services are based on residence
- Legislated
 - “Sufficient” levels to all
- Three main actors providing benefits and services
 - The public health care system is involved in health care
 - The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA) administers most of the benefits
 - Public schools

Preventive health care

- Legislated
 - The municipality has to provide services free of charge to their residents
 - Maternity clinics for pregnant mothers
 - Child health clinics
 - Health care for school-aged children
- Maternity clinic
 - Provide guidance in all matters related to pregnancy (both mothers and fathers)
 - Monitor health of fetus and mother and provide screening (fetal chromosome and growth defects during pregnancy)
 - Confirms pregnancy in order to apply for maternity grant and maternity allowance from Kela

3

Preventive health care

- Child health clinics
 - Monitor and support the physical, mental and social growth and development of children below school age
 - Vaccinations according to the national vaccination program
 - At least 9 visits when child is under 1 year old
 - After age 1, at least 6 visits
- Health care for school-aged children
 - Every school has a nurse and a doctor assigned
 - Check children's health and development and gives first aid if an accident
 - Vaccinations according to the national vaccination program

4

Child and Family Benefits

- Maternity grant
 - Maternity package or tax-free cash benefit (170 euros in 2019)
- Parental allowances
 - Maternity leave 105 working days
 - Parental leave 158 working days
 - Paternity leave 54 working days, of which 18 together with the mother
 - Earnings related or flat rate (27,86 euros/day)
- Child benefit
 - For each child permanently resident in Finland until the child turns 17
 - 95 (first child) -173 (fifth and additional children) euros

Child and Family Benefits

- Public day care
 - Municipalities offer public day care
 - Subjective right to day care until 2016 when municipalities can restrict access to 20 hours if parents do not work or study
- Child care allowances
 - If child is < 3 years old and not in public day care
 - Flat rate
 - Care supplements if earnings of the family low
 - Possible municipal supplements
- Private day care allowance
 - Support if the child is looked after by a caregiver paid by the family or a private day care provider
 - Basic amount, care supplement (if low earnings), possible municipal supplements

Child and Family Benefits

- When a child gets ill
 - Public health care
 - Subsidized private health care
 - Some compensation for medicines
 - Temporary care leave if child is under age of 10, maximum 4 days
- Serious illness or disabled
 - Care allowance for children under 16 years of age
 - Disability allowance for children under 16 years of age
 - Medical rehabilitation
- If parents separate and the parent liable for maintenance does not pay child support
 - Child maintenance allowance to custodial parent

Kela administers the payments

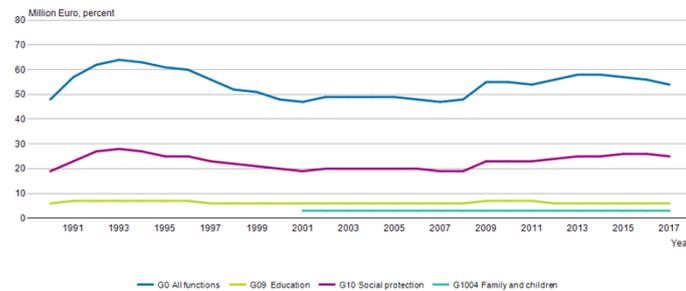
- Applications to Kela
 - Online
 - Printed forms
 - Help at Kela's offices
- Take-up rate is not an issue, since universal benefits and related to preventive health care
- Kela's strategic objectives:
 - Providing an excellent customer experience to everyone equally
 - Together with our partners, we provide preventive and effective services that are right for our customers' circumstances.
 - We develop digital services that are best in class in Finland and respond to the individual and changing needs of our customers.

Education

- Education free of charge for residents
- Municipalities arrange education until grade 9
 - Public day care
 - Pre-school (child aged 6)
 - Primary education
 - Grade 1-9
 - Children aged 7 – 15
- Secondary education
 - General curriculum -> matriculation exam
 - Vocational education
- Tertiary education
 - University
 - University of applied science

Costs

General government expenditures by sector 1991-2017, percent of GDP



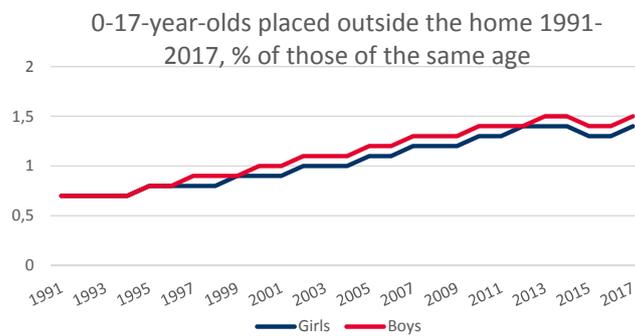
Statistics Finland. Total general government expenditure. The material was downloaded from Statistics Finland's interface service on 5th May 2019 with the license [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Is the universal support sufficient?

- Finnish children do comparatively well
 - However, an increasing need of the welfare state
 - Mental illness
 - Broken families
 - Higher demands at the labor market
- And
 - Increasing number of children placed outside the home
 - Increased poverty levels
 - NEET level comparatively high

11

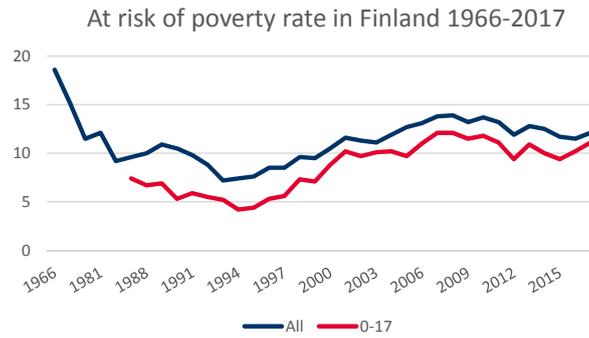
Is the universal support sufficient?



Data from: National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)

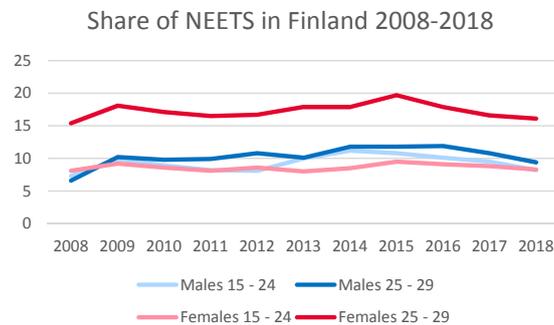
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Is the universal support sufficient?



Data from: Statistics Finland. Income distribution statistics, material was downloaded from Statistics Finland's interface service on 5th May 2019 with the license [CC BY 4.0](#).

Is the universal support sufficient?



Data from: Statistics Finland. Labour force survey, material was downloaded from Statistics Finland's interface service on 5th May 2019 with the license [CC BY 4.0](#).

Is the universal support sufficient?

- Vulnerable families and their children need extra support
 - Universal (preventive) health care and transfers not sufficient
- OECD report: Investing in Youth FINLAND (May 2019) suggests:
 - Improving the transition from school to work
 - Strengthening support for young people

Family Centres & the Growth Package in Flanders

An approach of state support for children and families in Flanders

Lieve Krobea

Agency Child and Family

Kind & Gezin

Welcome

Kind & Gezin

Agency of the Flemish government

Active on 4 policy area's:

- (Preventive) Family Support
- Youth assistance & youth protection
- Child care
- Adoption

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=215&v=5AAmAUPbFIE

Kind & Gezin

Content

- Introduction on family centres in Flanders
- Building blocks of family centres
- Accessibility
- Proportional universalism
- Groeipakket (“growth package”)



Kind & Gezin

© Kind & Gezin

Family Centres in Flanders

Partnerships towards better services for children and families

What happens on the doorstep and around the house defines the future, welfare and health of young children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) points out the government's responsibility to realise the rights of the child and to support parents in their parenting role, since child-rearing is a shared responsibility between the private and public spheres. Although parents are responsible for their children's upbringing, society too carries some responsibility. This mainly consists of creating the conditions which allow parents and other legal guardians to perform their responsibilities (Art 18 UNCRC, Belgian Constitution).



Kind & Gezin



A BETTER WORLD FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Investing in their environment

This vision text was created in cooperation between Kind & Gezin (Child and Family Agency) and the following scientific experts:
Sara De Mulder, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, Comparative Science of Cultures, University of Ghent
Steven Groenez, leader of the research team, HIWA, University of Leuven
Prof. Michel Vandebroek, Department of Social Work and Social Welfare Studies, University of Ghent
Prof. Frank Vandembroucke, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Leuven
Peter Verduyck, Brussels-Capital Health and Social Observatory, Joint Community Commission, Brussels

Kind & Gezin

A number of benchmark criteria for initiatives for young children

Make sure that you do not work out of the context for each initiative, but that you take the different life spheres of young children into account from the very start onwards.

Invest in a very local embedding, where the different life spheres of young children are attuned to one another.

Allow young children to actually be young children and invest, above all, in an inviting, participatory environment for young children.

Use an equal offer for each child, whenever possible, but invest more, if necessary.

Check whether you contribute to a proportional universal basic service provision.

Family Centres in Flanders



Kind & Gezin

Building blocks

1. Interprofessional collaboration at the local level
2. For all (future) families with children and youngsters (aged 0 to 24 years)
3. Network-based and/ or centre-based (a hybrid model), combined with outreaching services
4. **Accessibility**, adaption to the local needs, integrated services, user participation



Kind & Gezin

What does accessibility mean? What do we want to achieve?

"A 'Huis van het Kind' brings people together, it facilitates interactions and social support."

"When we have a question about the upbringing of our child, we now know where to go to."

"It is normal to go to a 'Huis van het Kind'. Everyone goes there."

"It is a place to discover new activities and it is a place for children."

"Without the help of the people in the 'Huis van het Kind' my life, and foremost the life of my child, would be less positive. They helped my family a lot by taking into account the whole context in which my child had to grow up, without judging."

Kind & Gezin

Things to consider



Fields of tension in the network that have an influence on the in- and exclusion of (potential) service users:

- *Universal versus selective provision*
- *Instrumental versus life world oriented approaches*
- *Family-oriented versus child-oriented strategies*
- *Support versus control*

Reference: Caroline Vermeiren, Dorien Van Haute, Nicolas Jacquet, Charlotte Noël, Peter Raeymaeckers, Griet Roets, Michel Vandenbroeck, Laurent Nisen, Danielle Dierckx. **Integrated networks to combat child poverty: a mixed methods research on network governance and perspectives of policy makers, social workers and families in poverty.** Final Report. Brussels: Belgian Science Policy Office 2018 – 104 p. (BRAIN-be (Belgian Research Action through Interdisciplinary Networks))

Proportional universalism

= supporting **all** children and families in proportion to their needs

Why?

- Because every child matters

+

- *“The most succesful strategies in addressing **child poverty** have proved to be those underpinned by policies improving the well-being of all children, whilst giving careful consideration to children in particularly vulnerable situations”* (European commission, 2013, 20 february)



Proportional universalism

However, social inequalities are not limited to the contrast between the poorest and the others, although this dichotomy approach is often used. Social inequalities are rather caused by a socially layered division of the population, which is also referred to as the social gradient. This gradient is the result of an unequal distribution of material and immaterial opportunities and power within society (Van Oyen et al., 2011). As this gradient cuts across all population groups, action needs to be directed at the whole population and not just at the most disadvantaged groups (Stegeman et al., 2012). This means that basic facilities or basic services should realise to things at the same time. It is about being equally accessible to everyone up to a certain level, preferably as efficiently and easily as possible, and about concentrating more on those who start with fewer opportunities or live in less favourable circumstances (Mortier, 2012).

Growth package

- The **general Law on family allowances** (30 June 2014) brought together the various family allowances schemes for salaried persons, self-employed persons and civil servants in one single law on family allowances.
- The **sixth State reform** transferred the competences in the field of family allowances, the maternity fee and the adoption fee to the Communities.
- As of January 1st, 2019 the system for child allowances in the Flemish Region changed and was replaced by the "**Groeipakket**" ("**growth package**"): www.groeipakket.be.

What is included in the growth package

Family benefits:

Every child:

- The start amount: 1.122 €
- The basic amount: 163,20 €/month
- The school bonus: 20,40 up to 61,20 €

Targeted:

- Social allowance: 51 up to 81,60 €/month
- Orphan allowance: 81,60 or 163,20 €/month
- Allowance for foster children: 63,03 €/month
- Allowance for children with disabilities or illnesses: 82,37 up to 549,12 € / month

What is included in the growth package

Participation allowances:

Every child:

- Childcare allowance: 3,23 €/day
- Toddler allowance: 132,60 €/year

Targeted:

- School allowance:

EDUCATION	AMOUNT
NURSERY EDUCATION	Average €103,70/year
PRIMARY EDUCATION	Average €148/year
SECONDARY EDUCATION	Average €682/year
HIGHER EDUCATION	€50/year (on top of the education allowance)

The end

Questions?



 Υπουργείο Εργασίας, Πρόνοιας και Κοινωνικών Ασφαλίσεων 

Tackling Child Poverty and Social Exclusion

27 May 2019

Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance

 Υπουργείο Εργασίας, Πρόνοιας και Κοινωνικών Ασφαλίσεων
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FAMILY BENEFITS IN CYPRUS

The Cypriot child and family-oriented welfare state at a glance:

Cash benefits

- Guaranteed Minimum Income (including housing allowance) – means tested
- Child Benefit – means tested
- Single Parent Benefit – means tested
- Child day care supplement – means tested
- Maternity and Paternity benefits – universal
- Childbirth Grant – universal
- Several disability benefits depending on type of disability – universal

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FAMILY BENEFITS IN CYPRUS

The Cypriot child and family-oriented welfare state at a glance:

Benefits in kind

- **Baby's Dowry** – providing all the necessary items for the care of a newborn baby for the first few months after birth – targeted / means tested
- Subsidizing **preschool child care programs** for working parents – universal
- **Free transportation** with public transportation means – targeted
- **Free medical care** under the National Health Insurance Scheme – universal
- **Full subsidization of fees** for any of the Ministry of Education's after-school programs and all public school fees – targeted
- **Free new laptop** to middle school students – targeted



GUARANTEED MINIMUM INCOME

The monthly benefit, including housing allowance, is calculated according to the composition of the family:

- €480 is calculated for the main beneficiary
- €240 are added for any dependant over 14 years old, including the husband / wife
- €144 are added to the amount for every dependant under the age of 14
- An appropriate housing allowance is added to the total, depending on family composition and area of residence

Guaranteed Minimum Income Calculation

Basic needs for 1 person	€480
Basic needs for husband / wife or partner	€240
Basic needs for children 14 to 28 years old	€240
Basic needs for children under 14 years old	€144
Housing allowance	Depending on family composition and area of residence



FAMILY BENEFITS

Child Benefit

- **Beneficiaries:** Families with one or more underage children

• **Income Criteria (per annum):**

Children	1	2	3	4
Income:	€49.000	€59.000	€64.000	€69.000

- **Property Criteria:** Immovable and moveable property up to €1.200.000

• **Benefit Level:**
(example for Incomes up to €19.500)

Children	2	3	4	5
Monthly Benefit:	€95	€261,25	€558,33	€698



FAMILY BENEFITS

Single Parent Benefit

- **Beneficiaries:** Single parents who live with underage children

• **Income Criteria (per annum):**

Children	1	2+
Income:	€39.000	€49.000

- **Property Criteria:** Immovable and moveable property up to €1.200.000

• **Benefit Level:**
(example for incomes up to €19.500)

Children	1	2	3	4
Monthly Benefit:	€180	€360	€540	€720

- Single Parent benefit is provided **in addition** to Child Benefit



FAMILY BENEFITS

Universal Disability Benefits

- **Beneficiaries:** All persons with evaluated disabilities, regardless of income or assets

Benefits linked to specific disabilities	Monthly Benefit
Severe Mobility Disability	€337,66
Tetraplegia – house care allowance	€854,30
Paraplegia – house care allowance	€350
Special allowance for the blind	€316,37
Commuting Allowance for persons with disabilities	€51-102
Universal Disability Benefit for severe disabilities	€848,32
Assistance for buying other technical means	Up to €13.500 – one time payment



CITIZEN SERVICE CENTERS

CSC: How do they measure up?

POSITIVE RESPONSES	Measured in 2017	Measured in 2014
Overall satisfaction	92,4%	80,4%
Training and knowledge if staff	93,1%	88,7%
Waiting time to be serviced	87,3%	70,6%
Speed of service	90,5%	77,3%
Handling of cases with responsibility and confidence	86,9%	81%
Overall satisfaction with telephone service	87,4%	n/a

Source: Public Administration and Personnel Department (PAPD), Ministry of Finance , 2017



FAMILY BENEFITS IN CYPRUS

Reaching Outwards: Social Service Officers in the Neighborhood

- An ambitious program regarding the restructuring of the **Social Welfare Services**
- A **Social Welfare Benefits Administration Service** has been established in 2014
 - Within the last 4 years the administration of all cash benefits have been transferred from the Social Welfare Services to the new Service
 - This has created the capacity for the transformation of the Social Welfare Services in order to fulfill its role in supporting the most vulnerable persons and households
- The restructuring program has entered its final stage, brand-named "**Social Service Officers in the Neighborhood**"
 - Social Service officers team up with municipal and local authorities as well as NGOs and active citizens to reach out to all the households that might need support and network with them on a personal basis
- In the full deployment of the restructuring, the Ministry aims to have a direct line of communication with every vulnerable household



Thank you.





“Tackling Child Poverty and Social Exclusion – Approaches and Experiences of State Support for Children in Europe”

Where do we go from here? Next Steps from the perspective of European Civil Society

Réka Tunyogi, Eurochild

Berlin, 27 May 2019

- Introducing **Eurochild**
- Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU
- **Upcoming opportunities for investing in children**



176 members

In 34 countries

23 national networks of children's rights organisations are National Partner Networks.

Advocating for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking

A European network of organisations working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children.

The UNCRC is the foundation of all our work.



1. End child poverty and social exclusion

2. End to institutional care for all children in Europe

3. Greater recognition of children's rights in political discourse

HOW

- Influencing policies and funding
- Harnessing members' practice & knowledge
- Child and youth participation
- Partnerships and alliances



And yet ...

- 1 in 4 children grows up at risk of poverty & social exclusion. That is 25 million children in the EU 28.
- Early childhood education & care remains chronically underfunded across the EU - albeit with some evidence of improvements
- Children's access to quality housing & their living environment has deteriorated in recent years
- Whilst the number of children in institutions is falling, children are still entering care due to poverty or disability



Children aged 0-17 at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), %, 2017

GROUPINGS	COUNTRIES (low → high)
14-20%	CZ (14.2), DK (14.5), FI (15.1), SI (15.1), NL (16.6), PL (17.9), DE (18) , EE (18.8), SE (19.4)
21-27%	BE (22), FR (22.3), SK (22.5), AT (23), MT (23), LU (23.6), LV (23.9), PT (24.2), IE (25.2), CY (25.5), HR (25.8), EU (26.9)
28-34%	UK (27.4), ES (31.3) HU (31.6), LT (31.6), IT (32.1),
35% -	EL (36.2), BG (41.6), RO (41.7)

Source: Eurostat

- Child poverty is a **multidimensional**: it relates to a child's opportunity to participate in ordinary economic, social and cultural activities.
- **If child poverty is multidimensional, holistic and integrated approaches are needed** → thinking beyond professional silos – education, health, social welfare, housing etc.
- **Ensuring the child & family are considered as actors & involved in decision making** – not 'passive recipients of support' but active agents of change.



- Guiding Member States in policy development
- Dedicated to tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being
- Rights-based approach in line with UNCRC
- Looking at solutions beyond income
- Integrated strategies to tackle child poverty & social exclusion → Synergy between sectors and coordination between actors

Three-pillar structure:

1. Access to **adequate resources** for children and families
2. Access to **affordable quality services**
3. Children's **right to participate**



Investment that is prioritising children

- Takes the best interest of children as the starting point
- Evidence based
- Strategic: measures are addressing the gaps
- Comprehensive in nature & collaborative in practice
- Backed up by holistic national strategies on children's social inclusion with relevant action & implementation plans
- Ensures professionals working with children are trained in participatory practice & children's rights
- Promotes progressive universalism



- Building awareness amongst policy-makers that child poverty is a widespread problem in Europe
- Seeking political will: to have committed champions among decision-makers to end child poverty
- Promoting the investing in children approach
- Monitoring and assessing policy development
- Bringing the knowledge and evidence from the national to the EU level
- Building the capacity of national member organisations



1. **New European Commissioners, new European Parliament**
2. **European strategy for economic and social development 2020-2030**
 - expectations towards new European Commission to have one
 - Will it prioritise children?
3. **European Semester**
 - monitors implementation of the Pillar through a new “**social scoreboard**”
 - **Annual country specific recommendations**
 - **2019: investment needs** listed for every country = priorities for EU funding



European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)

- Tackling child poverty is explicitly mentioned as a specific **objective**
- Minimum allocation increased for **social inclusion**
- EP position ring-fenced **5%** of the ESF+ resources for tackling child poverty in line with the EC Recommendation on Investing in Children
- EP position foresees an amount of **EUR 5.9 billion** to be allocated to the **Child Guarantee**
- Partnership Principle strengthened – 2% should be prioritised for the **capacity building** of stakeholders incl. civil society

Cohesion policy in general:

Enabling condition requires **national strategies** for poverty reduction & social exclusion



Objective: Analysis of the **design, feasibility, governance and implementation** options of a possible future Child Guarantee Scheme in the EU Member States – looking at 4 groups of particularly vulnerable children

- (i) children living in precarious family situations,
- (ii) children residing in institutions,
- (iii) children of recent migrants
- (iv) children with disabilities and other children with special needs.

Final study in March 2020



We know that inequality in society can be best addressed in childhood – **use the EU opportunities** to support that

Public policy responses need to prioritise investments in children: **in line with strategies**

Inspiring practice needs to be shared, studied, and used if possible

Cross-sectoral **cooperation & coordination**, including with civil society



Thank you!
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