



Fighting child poverty in European cities

Lessons from cities for the EU Child Guarantee

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About this study

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About Eurocities:

Eurocities is the network of 190 cities in 39 countries, representing 130 million people, working together to ensure a good quality of life for all people. Through joint work, knowledge-sharing and coordinated Europe-wide activity, the network ensures that cities and people are heard in Europe.



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Executive Summary

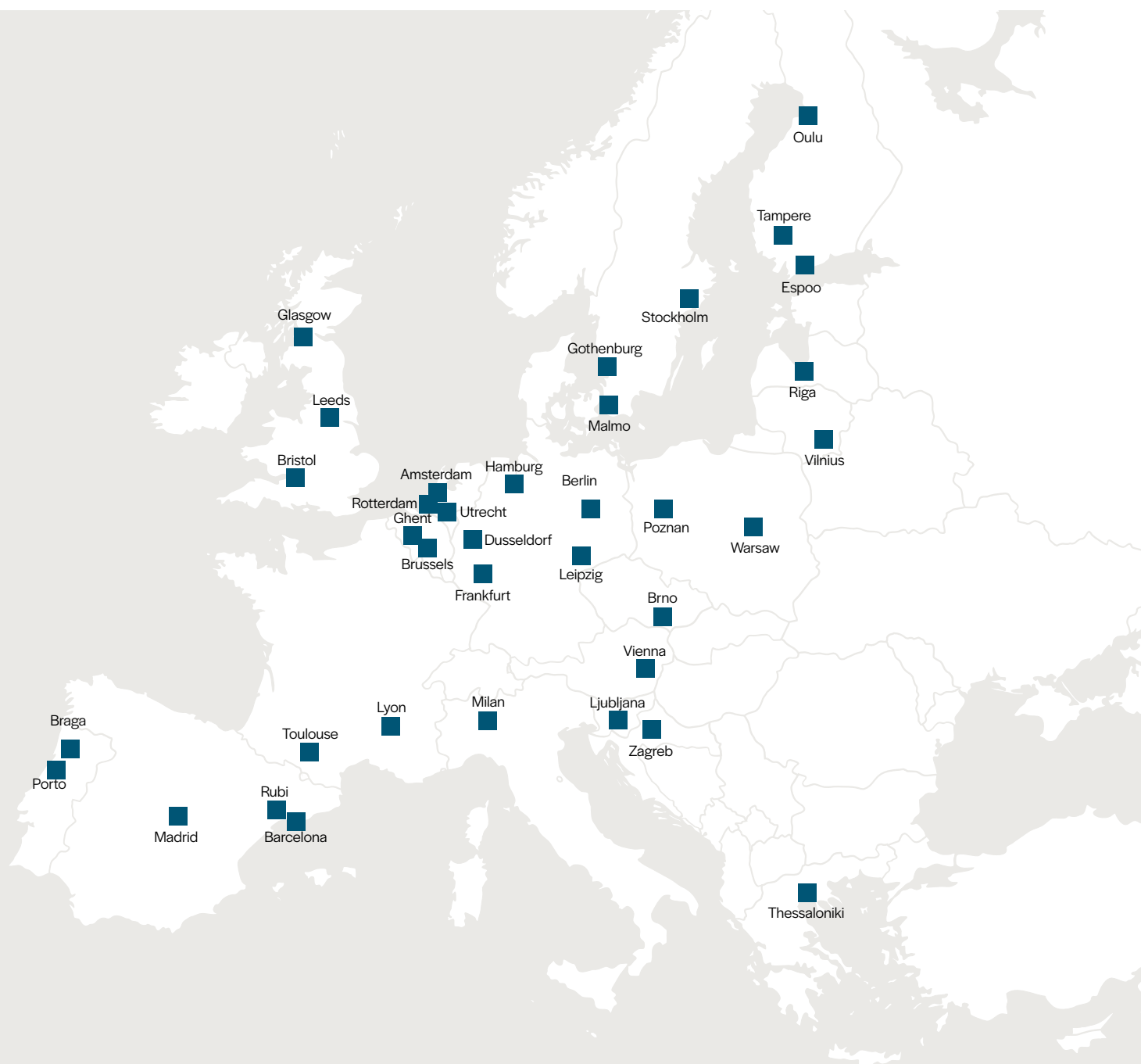
Cities play a key role in breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and ensuring equal opportunities for all children. As the COVID-19 pandemic has had a strong impact on children, disrupting their schooling and affecting their well-being, social contacts and even their nutrition, cities have stepped up their actions to support children and their families. Yet, child poverty is on the rise, hitting the poorest hardest.

Eurocities conducted a survey to map the situation of child poverty in cities across Europe. Many cities already deliver comprehensive strategies to prevent and mitigate child poverty at local level. However, we found that cities' efforts are not always recognised or supported at national and EU levels. Cities are investing many resources from their municipal budgets in child and family services and integrating those with other municipal services such as healthcare, housing, employment and social services, but due to the increasing levels of child poverty and the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on children, these resources are no longer sufficient and need to be complemented by higher social investments in children from national and EU budgets.

This research forms part of Eurocities' broader initiative 'Inclusive Cities for All',¹ which helps cities deliver the European Pillar of Social Rights at local level. This is the fourth survey conducted by Eurocities, following surveys in 2018 and 2019, which collected evidence from cities on policies relating to the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. This time the focus of the survey was on principle 11 on childcare and support for children.² Our aim was to understand what cities are doing to protect children from poverty, what specific measures they put in place to enhance equal opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and what more needs to be done to eradicate child poverty in our cities and in Europe.

¹ www.inclusivecities4all.eu.

² European Pillar of Social Rights principle 11 states, "a. Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality. b. Children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities" (bit.ly/3ozVoR3).



The report covers 35 cities³ in 18 European countries governing over 30 million people. The evidence was gathered directly from city authorities and their relevant administrative departments. The responses were integrated into a comparative analysis to identify trends and map inspiring practices.

This report presents the findings on how cities are fighting child poverty. It provides:

- An overview of the local situation of child poverty in cities in Europe
- Strategic city approaches to reduce child poverty and targeted measures to support those most in need
- Good practices of city initiatives including measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on children
- Common challenges and gaps in service provision
- Policy recommendations for the EU Child Guarantee

The findings from this report serve as valuable inputs from cities to inform the development and delivery of the EU Child Guarantee to address the real needs of children at local level.

³ Data collected over July - September 2020 in: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Braga, Bristol, Brno, Brussels, Dusseldorf, Espoo, Frankfurt, Ghent, Glasgow, Gothenburg, Hamburg, Leeds, Leipzig, Ljubljana, Lyon, Madrid, Malmö, Milan, Oulu, Porto, Poznań, Riga, Rotterdam, Rubi, Stockholm, Tampere, Thessaloniki, Toulouse, Utrecht, Vienna, Vilnius, Warsaw and Zagreb.

Key findings



Child poverty in most cities is higher than the national average in the given country. Children and their families face specific urban challenges that increase their risk of poverty, such as higher living costs in cities and lack of affordable housing.

Child poverty has a strong territorial dimension. Data from cities show that children living in the most deprived urban areas are at three to ten times higher risk of poverty, as they often accumulate multiple risk factors, such as poor housing, inequality of opportunities, risk of discrimination, violence, and unequal access to services such as childcare, healthcare and education. Tackling this requires a place-based approach that targets deprived areas with a focus on prevention and early intervention and holistic support to families in need.

Many cities already carry out an integrated local strategy to reduce child poverty. They often combine a systemic approach of support to families with targeted measures to tackle the specific needs of children from particularly vulnerable groups (single-parent families, migrants, Roma, special needs). In doing so, many cities have set up child or youth councils or other similar participation structures to ensure children's voices are heard in the policies and decisions that affect them.

Cities play a crucial role in fighting child poverty and breaking the cycle of inequality by:

- Ensuring the right to education and childcare by strengthening the accessibility and increasing the availability and quality of childcare for vulnerable families, including by providing and funding additional educational support for children in need.
- Actively reaching out to vulnerable families and providing them with targeted support to access social security and assistance as well as specific local measures for social inclusion, whether in terms of debt relief or access to decent housing or finding a job or training, among other things.
- Promoting healthy development of children through outreach measures such as vaccination programmes, accessible primary care for all children and providing healthy nutrition (free school lunches) to combat child obesity.
- Integrating services (e.g. education, childcare, healthcare and welfare services) in a coordinated approach and adapting them to meet the specific challenges of families in the local area (e.g. flexible childcare hours for parents who work night shifts).
- Coordinating local partnerships with the private and volunteer sector to maximise resources.
- Promoting the right to social and cultural self-development by organising accessible forms of participation and co-creation with children, and ensuring their voices are heard.
- Piloting new approaches to detect children at risk of poverty and prevent it, and policy innovations for 'child proofing' all policies that impact children and establishing 'child friendly' budgets.

Fighting child poverty is a priority for many city councils. This is highlighted by the considerable investment that cities make in child poverty prevention and mitigation measures. To date, 18 cities – nearly a third of all cities that signed pledges to the European Pillar of Social Rights – committed together over €6 billion to reinforce childcare services and provide specific support for children in need.

Cities are committed to doing more to fight child poverty but need more resources. Given the COVID-19 crisis has increased child poverty and shrunk municipal budgets, cities' resources are no longer sufficient and need to be complemented by greater social investment in children from national and EU budgets. The EU Child Guarantee is key in this regard to recognise, support and finance cities' efforts to reduce child poverty and promote equal opportunities for all children.

1. Local situation of child poverty

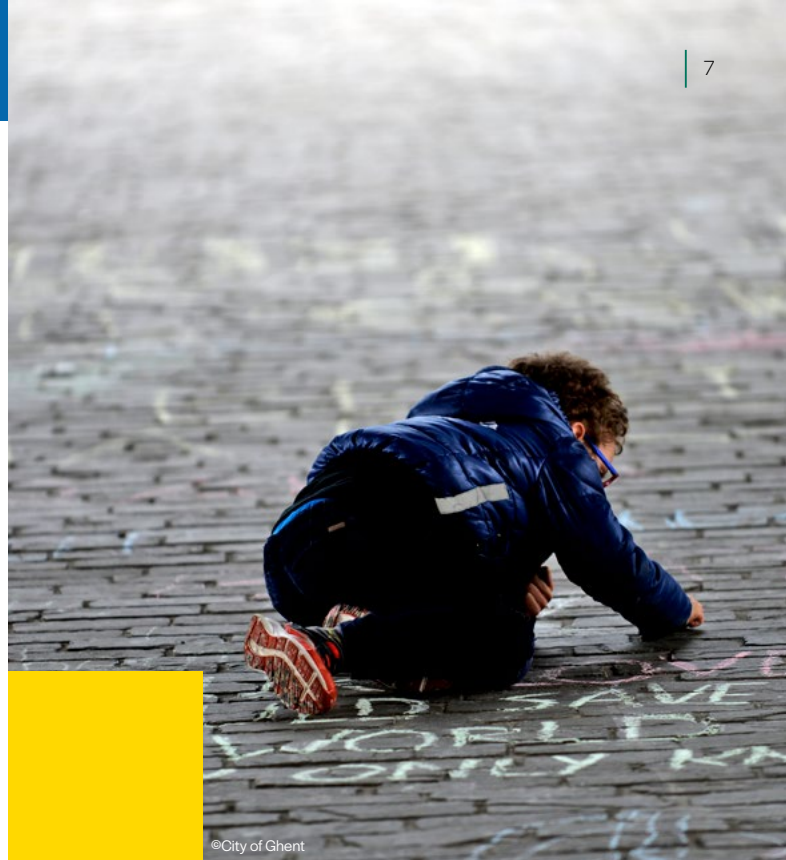
1.1 Overview of child poverty in cities

Most cities in Europe have a higher child poverty rate than the national average in their countries, with nearly 9 in 10 cities surveyed (86%) having a higher share of children living in poverty than the average in their country. In some cities this is more than twice as high, such as in **Brussels** (40% vs. 20% average for Belgium) and **Rotterdam** (19.7% vs. 8.1% average in the Netherlands). This trend highlights that families who live in cities face specific urban challenges that increase their risk of poverty, such as higher living costs, lack of affordable housing and shortage of places in childcare, among other factors. This is, in part, the result of the dynamic growth of cities, which are now home to 75% of Europe's population.

The level of child poverty varies widely across cities in Europe, from 7.8% in **Stockholm** to 40% in **Brussels**. However, in the absence of a common methodology, rates are difficult to compare given that cities use different definitions and indicators to measure child poverty.

Data from cities shows that children in single-parent families, children of undocumented migrants, and children living in precarious housing are particularly vulnerable groups. For instance, in **Amsterdam**, the share of children in single-parent families who live in poverty is four times higher than that of children growing up in a household with two parents.

Looking at trends in child poverty in recent years, most cities report that child poverty was decreasing before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, all cities agree that the COVID-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on children and expect to see a rise in the number of children growing up in poverty, with many parents losing or expected to lose their job or income as a result of the crisis.



1.2 Disparities within cities

Children in the same city may face a higher or lower risk of poverty depending on where they live. Nearly all cities (32 of 35 surveyed) report that in some of their city districts child poverty is considerably higher than the city average. In most cities, there are big disparities between city districts or neighbourhoods, with child poverty rates ranging from three to ten times higher in poor areas compared to more affluent areas. For example, in **Amsterdam** child poverty is 8% in the city centre and 26% in the less well-off South-East district, while in **Ghent** it stands at 1.5% in wealthy areas and 31% in the poorest districts. In **Bristol**, the difference is even greater: 5.7% in well-off wards and 51% in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

These findings show that child poverty has a strong territorial dimension in cities, with children in the most deprived areas facing the highest risk of poverty, which is explained by demographic trends and *de facto* housing segregation in cities. As housing prices have dramatically increased in cities, many families cannot find an affordable home. This has led to a concentration of families with similar socio-economic backgrounds (on low income, newly arrived migrants or Roma, etc.) in certain urban areas where housing is cheaper or social housing is available. This has triggered a concentration of social disadvantages in deprived areas, resulting in socio-economic inequalities between neighbourhoods of the same city. Therefore, children in the most deprived urban areas often accumulate multiple risk factors, such as poor housing, risk of discrimination, violence, and unequal access to services such as childcare, healthcare and education (see chapter 6 on gaps and challenges).



1.3 Defining and measuring child poverty in cities

There is no common definition or measure of child poverty used by cities, which hinders the comparability of data across cities. Different cities define and measure child poverty differently. Half of cities in our sample use their national definition, and a quarter use the EU definition of children 'at risk of poverty or social exclusion'. Some cities use their own local definition.

Most cities define child poverty, at least in part, by referring to a child's economic vulnerability on the basis of family income level. Some also combine social or cultural indicators in their definition. Cities such as **Ghent**, **Madrid** and **Frankfurt** use aggregate indicators in their analyses, such as including parents' level of education and employment situation, housing conditions (e.g. living space per resident), and health situation. Other cities measure child poverty based on perceived absolute and/or relative poverty. A minority of cities do not measure child poverty based on quantitative indicators.

The most widely used indicators that cities use for measuring child poverty are:

■ Economic indicators:

- about a third of cities use indicators that mostly measure household income, either as 50% or 60% of the median income or at 110% or 125% of the minimum income in the respective country;
- some cities set specific annual income thresholds, adjusted yearly, or available funds (e.g. value of owned housing) lower than which households are considered poor.

■ Social indicators:

- families with children who receive welfare benefits;
- families who live in social housing.

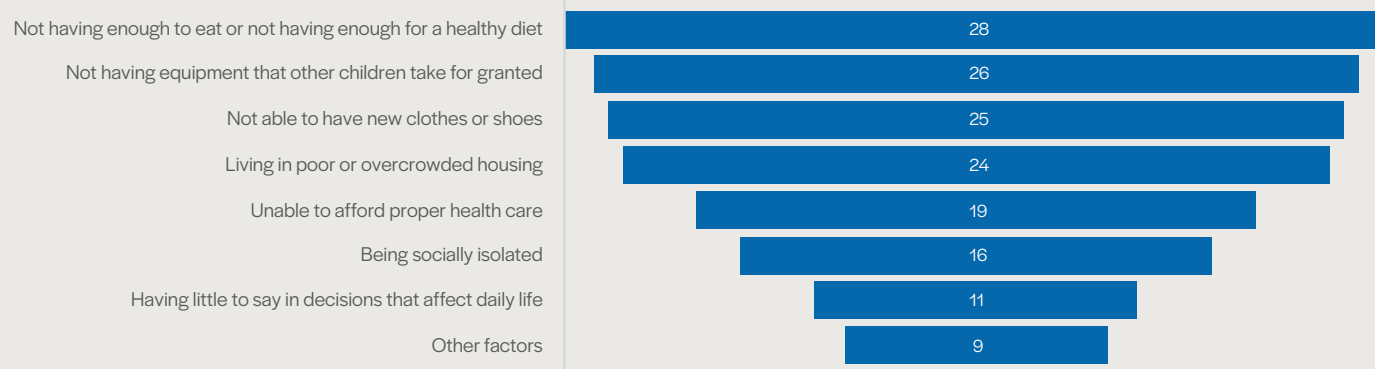
■ Cultural indicators:

- participation in leisure, cultural or sports activities;
- being able to afford to go on holiday (at least once a year).

Cities converge on the key elements of child material deprivation, as shown in the graph below. Most cities agree that children who live in poverty or deprivation do not have enough to eat, do not have equipment (TV, computer, mobile phone) that their better-off peers take for granted, are unable to afford new clothes, or live in poor or overcrowded housing. Half of the cities surveyed also look into whether children can afford healthcare and/or to be socially active (able to invite friends at home). A third of cities also consider it a risk of poverty if a child has little or no say in decisions that affect their daily life.

Notably, some cities add additional factors of deprivation in their local definitions of child poverty. For instance, **Zagreb** includes 'not having a mobile phone or a computer that most of their peers have', while **Rubi** includes whether a child has access to internet and new technology resources. **Barcelona** includes children in energy poverty, refugee children, unaccompanied minors, children in precarious housing, and those who cannot afford to take part in leisure activities or go on holiday. **Utrecht's** definition includes being unable to participate in cultural events, sporting activities or school. **Milan** adds educational poverty, namely "the condition in which a child or adolescent is deprived of the right to learning in the broad sense, from cultural and educational opportunities to the right to play".

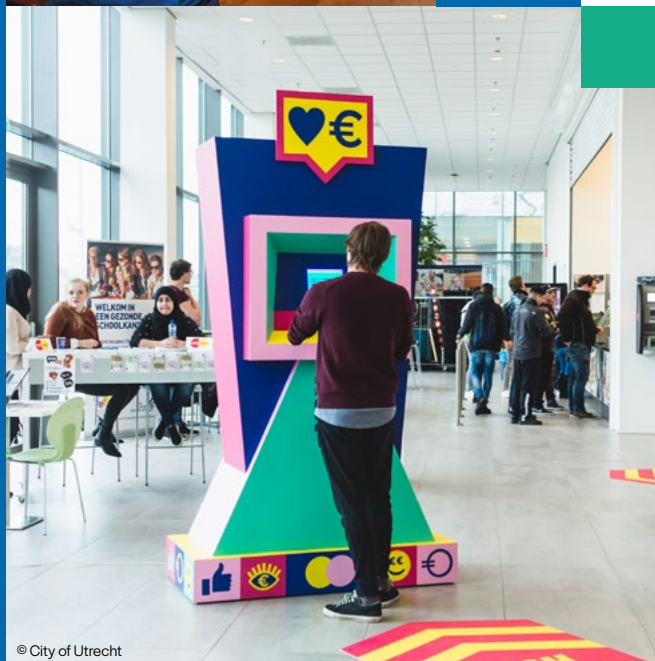
Which of the following aspects are covered in your city's definition of a child living in poverty or deprivation?



Note: data in the table shows the number of cities that reported each aspect. Each city reported more than one aspect.

Good practices in measuring and monitoring child poverty at neighbourhood level in cities

Utrecht developed a local survey on poverty, including child poverty, that runs every two years and informs the city's anti-poverty policy. Similarly, **Vienna** runs a municipal survey on living conditions that, among others, identifies children in households at risk of poverty or material deprivation. **Madrid** has devised its own aggregate indicator – Territorial Vulnerability Indicator – to measure disparities in the risk of poverty between its different districts and neighbourhoods, based on longitudinal data at household level. **Frankfurt** has a similar approach with its 'discrimination index' to monitor social segregation and disadvantage across the city's districts. **Warsaw** has created a spatial index based on the occurrence of social problems that affect children. It is a systematic monitoring of children at risk based on micro-level data. **Ghent** uses a big data dashboard called the 'Neighbourhood monitor' as a tool to tailor its actions to the needs at neighbourhood level.



1.4 Challenges related to local data on child poverty

Nearly all cities report facing challenges dealing with data on child poverty. The biggest challenge reported by cities is the limited availability of local data and lack of data sharing from higher levels of government to cities, followed by scarce capacity for monitoring and difficulty of translating data into useful insights to inform policy changes. There are also challenges related to data quality owing to the inability to detect real-life poverty of families beyond their income 'on paper' (families with high fixed costs), of families who are unknown to social services (undocumented migrants), and of families who don't speak a country's official language, which results in under-representation in data collection surveys.

According to **Leeds**, "poverty is commonly understood and discussed through statistics and 'gaps' which, whilst being of fundamental importance, only tell half of the story". This ambition to look beyond the statistics is also reflected by the challenge of **Tampere** to gather insights into real-life experiences of families. Other challenges relate to early detection of the risk of poverty, such as in **Rotterdam**, which seeks better indicators of risk factors through data science analysis. **Leipzig** would like to be able to combine data from different sources and to construct a more longitudinal view of child poverty, whereas **Amsterdam** aims to collect more evidence of the success of certain interventions. There is therefore a clear need to improve data collection and data availability on child poverty at a local, neighbourhood level, making it possible to better identify children at risk of poverty or social exclusion, plan tailored interventions to cover gaps in service provision in specific neighbourhoods, and improve the effectiveness of local policies to reduce child poverty.

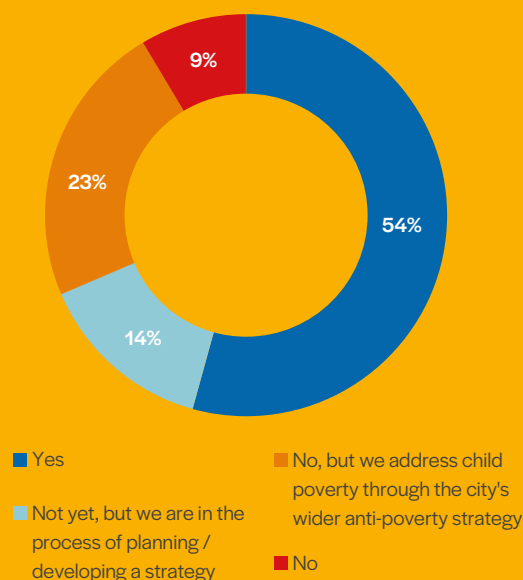
2. Municipal strategies to fight child poverty

Fighting child poverty is a key priority across cities in Europe. All cities surveyed reported working actively to prevent and/or reduce child poverty. The majority of cities in our sample (19 of 35) have a dedicated strategy to reduce child poverty at municipal level, with a further five cities currently developing such a municipal strategy (Milan, Oulu, Zagreb, Vilnius and Leipzig). Conversely, almost a quarter of cities (eight of 35) do not have a plan that specifically targets child poverty but integrate measures to prevent and reduce child poverty within their broader municipal anti-poverty strategy or policy. Only a minority of cities (three of 35) lack a strategic approach and focus on targeted measures and services to support the most vulnerable groups of children (in institutional care, Roma, unaccompanied minors, etc.).

Not having a separate strategy dedicated to child poverty does not mean that a city is not promoting children's well-being; many cities reported sharing similar priorities and approaches, regardless of whether they address child poverty with a specific strategy or as part of the city's global anti-poverty policy. Often, similar issues are tackled through similar policy measures. **Barcelona**, for instance, includes child poverty in its city strategy for inclusion and the reduction of social inequalities (2017-2027). **Zagreb** directs efforts to alleviate children's social exclusion through its municipal social plan (2014-2020, to be renewed for 2021-2027). **Gothenburg** works to promote equal opportunities for all children as part of its broader city strategy and programme 'Equal City'. In **Milan**, different areas of the municipality have a strategy to fight child poverty, but the city is yet to develop a unified municipal strategic plan. **Rotterdam** has a dedicated strategy called 'Unravel' to tackle poverty and debts, which has a strong focus on providing family support for children in poverty.

Therefore, regardless of whether cities have a specific strategy, they share common priorities in their endeavour to reduce child poverty. Accordingly, they dedicate funds and design measures aimed at improving access to childcare and school education and improving the family's situation.

Does your city have a strategy in place dedicated to reducing child poverty?



2.1 Trends in strategic approaches across cities

City responses reveal two main trends among cities in terms of the strategic approach to child poverty:

- **Holistic approach to improve the situation of the whole family** (e.g. improve access to housing, employment and decent income for parents);
- **Focus on improving access to early childhood education and care and school education** (e.g. increase number of places in childcare, reduce fees for low-income families, provide benefits in kind such as free school meals, support access to sports, culture and leisure).

What both approaches have in common is the focus on combining universal services to prevent child poverty or inequalities with specific services targeted at the most vulnerable groups to mitigate the effects of poverty, all while protecting children's rights. The Convention of the Rights of the Child guides the strategic approach in many cities to protect children's rights and promote children's participation, principles which are often embedded in the cities' strategies, policies and services working with children.

Role of universal services

Many cities apply the principle of '**progressive universalism**' to guide their strategic approach to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Based on this principle, cities provide proportional universal basic services as a way to address social inequalities and promote equal opportunities. This means that cities plan and deliver universal, basic services for all children or families (e.g. childcare, school education, family support, social services), which can offer a continuum of support according to needs at neighbourhood and individual level in order to achieve greater equity in outcomes for all children. The scale and intensity of the offered services are proportionate to the level of disadvantage or social inequalities. For example, many cities adjust childcare fees to families' income or provide city passes to allow discounted fees or free access to cultural, sports and leisure activities. In addition, many cities also offer other universal services for families, such as maternity clinics, child welfare centres, youth work, family centres and other similar services.

Holistic approach to improve the situation of the whole family

Two-thirds of cities in our sample adopt a systemic approach to tackling child poverty by addressing the factors that increase a family's risk of poverty. Significant efforts are made to ensure adequate access to affordable housing, employment and decent income for parents, as a way to prevent intergenerational poverty. Such a holistic approach reflects an understanding that contributing to parents' well-being has a positive impact on child welfare and can reduce their risk of vulnerability over the long term.

Many cities take on an integrated approach, cutting across many policy fields to reduce families' risk of poverty. For example, **Bristol**'s strategy includes a wide range of interconnected measures and services for ensuring access to childcare and education, supporting parental employment and adult skills, financial support, affordable housing and regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods, health and family support.

Madrid's Local Plan for Children and Adolescents includes children participation, maintaining a healthy urban environment, and a strategic line of action for the evaluation of ongoing interventions. **Espoo** has a three-year action plan to fight 'child family poverty' that includes reducing and preventing poverty through various measures relating to education, employment and homelessness, and supporting parents with income assistance, targeted services and cooperation between school and home, among other actions. The plan also seeks to raise awareness about family poverty and understand its effects.

Cities direct considerable resources to the reduction of *family poverty* and the improvement of families' and children's economic situation. For example, **Utrecht** considers financial stability to be the key to preventing child poverty, which is why the city has developed a strategy to support indebted families and increase early warning systems by partnering with doctor practices, housing corporations and electricity companies.

'Thriving' in Leeds

The approach to child poverty in Leeds is particularly innovative. 'Thriving', the city's child poverty strategy, focuses on creating 'partnerships' between all relevant local actors who work with children to foster joint responsibility and shared ownership to address issues that impact child poverty. The partnerships are made up of children and young people, council directorates, schools, and third sector, private sector, public sector and community representatives. These partnerships use their knowledge and expertise to investigate the impact of poverty on a specific area of children's lives, and then work together to create projects that mitigate this impact. The strategy seeks to use recent research to improve policies and projects to develop the most effective, low-cost, high-impact solutions to improving the lives of children in poverty. The work is coordinated by the Child Poverty Impact Board, which is a city-wide partnership working on measures to reduce the negative impact of child poverty through using evidence-based interventions. In addition, six Impact Workstreams, involving a wide range of partners across the city, work to improve children's lives in six areas: health and well-being, employment, learning, housing, empowering families and financial inclusion.

Read more: bit.ly/LeedsThriving

Glasgow works for the economic inclusion of single and young parents by focusing on the costs of pregnancy and/or the additional financial strain that having young children can entail, and implementing preventive measures accordingly. Since 2010, **Warsaw** has had in place the 'Family programme', a strategic plan covering both universal services available to all families and specific support services for families at risk of social exclusion. The specific support covers the provision of an integrated offer of services under the local support system, assistance in care and educational institutions, family assistance and youth work (working at 'street' level to help children in their environment). The 'Family-oriented approach' (FOA) is **Gothenburg**'s central strategy to achieve the objective of providing a good foundation for all children. FOA is an approach and working method but also an infrastructure for local collaboration.

Living in poor or precarious housing, or even homelessness, is a big barrier to child welfare and can induce effects that snowball: poor academic results, school dropout, health problems, poor nutrition and limited or no socio-cultural participation. Therefore, many cities have dedicated policies and programmes to help families in need to access social or affordable housing and rise out of homelessness. **Brussels** has designed targeted measures to promote affordable housing for single mothers, and it plans to strengthen its 'Housing First' project. **Riga** has implemented measures to foster access to affordable housing: families with children who have lived in the city for at least five years can register for municipal housing support; real estate tax relief is also available to ensure stable housing conditions. The **Ljubljana** Public Housing Fund helps prevent evictions, provides residential units when evictions from public housing occurs to family with children and prioritises young families when they apply for public/social housing.

Improve access to early childhood education and care services

Investing in childcare and education services is at the core of many municipal policies to fight child poverty and promote child welfare. Many cities believe in the key preventative role of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. Childcare is available for all children in Sweden and Finland as state policy. Even in the countries where childcare is not guaranteed for all children by law, many cities ensure access to ECEC services by providing financial support or reduced fees for low-income families. **Vienna**, for example, has implemented a non-contributory system, which means that kindergarten places are free of charge for all children aged five and under, with flexible hours to match the parents' work schedules. **Ljubljana** subsidises the fees of kindergartens according to the family's income so that all children can afford to attend preschool, thus achieving a 95.5% participation rate in 2019.

Warsaw rebuilt its childcare system in 2019-2020 to provide all willing parents a free place in nursery for their child. In just two years, the city doubled the number of places in nursery by building new public nurseries and purchasing many places in private nurseries.

Many cities focus on ensuring access to childcare and school education by increasing the number of places in public kindergartens, schools, and after-school care arrangements. For example, **Madrid** decided to create its own network of municipal nurseries, in addition to the regionally funded nurseries, to meet the increasing need for places and provide a service that was more affordable. Since 2017, the city has created 70 municipal nursery schools, which added 8,000 new childcare places, fully financed from the municipal budget with an annual allocation of €35.2 million. This represents an increase of 10% in the number of childcare places in just three years. Attendance is free or highly discounted (50% or 100%) for children from low-income families. They also benefit from free meals and extended hours.

City councils invest not only in the provision of childcare and education services, but also provide support to make it affordable for children in need. There are many examples of municipal measures that aim to help families in need to offset the costs related to education. This can take the form of free lunches in schools and preschools, as in **Düsseldorf**, or the allowance for school supplies that is offered to children in **Riga**. Other cities, like **Braga**, support access to education by covering transport costs for children. **Ghent** provides discounted fees for after-school care, while other cities cover extracurricular activities, including summer holidays.



Amsterdam and **Rotterdam** provide a free tablet or laptop to children in need to bridge the digital divide. **Milan** directs targeted services and funding to childcare facilities and schools in neighbourhoods that are considered vulnerable, in order to prevent early school dropouts and improve the quality of teaching. **Barcelona** takes multiple measures to ensure access to education for all children, including reduced nursery fees according to family income, subsidies for school canteen fees and free access to summer activities for low-income families.

Cities approach childcare and education from an all-encompassing perspective of children's healthy development. Access to early childcare education and care, school education and vocational training, is complemented with support for accessing sport, cultural and leisure activities (e.g. free summer holidays for children in need; city passes with free or discounted fees to museums, theatre, etc.). For example, **Tampere** contributes to children's education beyond school by helping families fund leisure activities and planning municipal activities for children during the school holidays. In **Utrecht** and **Rotterdam**, a child-support package is provided to families, which includes access to cultural events and financial aid to buy musical instruments. **Düsseldorf** emphasises the possibilities for support given by the 'Education and Social Participation' package and the city's efforts to invest in education beyond learning in the classroom environment, as it supports single- and multiday trips for kindergartens and schools and promotes their participation in social and cultural life.

Ljubljana's model to make childcare and preschool education affordable and accessible for all

Ljubljana recognises the key role that early childhood education and care plays in tackling inequalities and places it at the core of the city agenda. The city has increased capacity in public kindergartens by 3,000 places, a 30% increase over the past 14 years, achieving a 95.5% participation rate in 2019. The city subsidises childcare and preschool for all families. For the families with the lowest incomes, childcare is free. An additional subsidy is offered to parents with a housing loan. The city also ensures subsidised or free holiday childcare, free after-school activities, and free school lunches for children in need. Ljubljana has created the PIKA Education Centre to support the education of children with special needs, which includes training and professional development for educators in kindergartens, educational programmes for families and telephone and e-counselling for both staff and parents. The city has also reinforced inclusion programmes and individualised support for children with special needs, especially with autism. Ljubljana allocates a third of its city budget to childcare and education, which amounted to €1.1 billion from 2006 to 2020, topped up by €17.1 million from national and EU funds. In the future, the city aims to invest an annual €25 million to build and renovate its kindergartens and schools to increase capacity and make them more energy efficient.

Read more: bit.ly/LjubljanaCYP



2.2 Place-based approaches

Most cities – three-quarters of our sample (26 of 35) –, apply a territorial, place-based approach to address the specific needs of children in the neighbourhoods with the highest rates of poverty. Some cities have put in place integrated territorial plans to close the gaps in living conditions between the different areas of the city. Many cities have developed targeted programmes for the urban regeneration of their most deprived areas, which include actions to reduce child poverty.

For example, **Barcelona** has a strategy ‘Pla de Barri’ for 2016-2020 to reduce social inequalities in 16 neighbourhoods, with a total investment of €150 million. The strategy consists of ‘neighbourhood plans’, which include many actions to improve children’s social conditions. Similarly, **Leeds** has a model for ‘Locality Working’ to improve the city’s six most deprived neighbourhoods. The focus is on working in partnership with all actors in the neighbourhood (city councillors, health services, social services police, third sector, community leaders and residents) to make best use of the resources in the community and prioritise municipal investments in the local services most needed in these areas.

Gothenburg has a programme for an ‘Equal City 2018-2026’ to reduce disparities in living conditions in the city and enable citizens to reach their full potential in health and well-being. **Frankfurt** has developed an ‘Active Neighbourhood’ programme to improve housing and living conditions in deprived neighbourhoods, expand social and cultural activities, and strengthen the local economy and social cohesion, benefiting children in poverty and their families. **Milan** runs a programme through the QUBi project to improve

child poverty in 25 city districts by carrying out a tailored action plan for each neighbourhood. All these examples share a common theme of close local partnerships between municipal services, the third sector and the residents of the given neighbourhoods.

Other cities use a different place-based approach by providing additional investment and resources to cover the gaps in access to public services in the most deprived areas. Many cities, like **Leipzig**, invest in building more preschools and kindergartens in deprived areas to make them available to all children. Besides places in preschool, cities also invest in improving the overall social infrastructure in deprived areas, such as by constructing or renovating schools and vocational training centres, social housing, parks, sports and cultural centres. This shows that many cities allocate extra resources to make essential public services locally available in deprived areas. For example, **Brussels** runs specific healthcare centres in neighbourhoods with a low socio-economic index or a shortage of first-line health practitioners (doctors, paediatricians). Many cities like **Riga** and **Madrid** have social services in all districts, while **Gothenburg**, **Malmö** and **Leipzig** have in all districts centres intended for families (hereafter ‘family centres’) to access support as close to their home as possible.

Many cities allocate higher budgets or extra human resources to schools with higher concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, **Amsterdam** provides direct subsidies to schools in areas with high poverty rates while **Leipzig** directs additional human resources, such as social workers in schools in deprived areas, to work with children and their families. **Malmö** ensures a higher ratio of teachers per student by recruiting more teaching staff in schools in disadvantaged areas. Notably, many cities use

Glasgow’s model to reduce child poverty in the most deprived areas through ‘Thriving Places’

Glasgow has a long history of taking a place-based approach to tackling poverty. The city runs the ‘Thriving Places’ programme as part of the city-wide Community Plan. As part of this programme, ten priority neighbourhoods (2,500 to 3,500 children in each) were identified based on child poverty rates and key deprivation indicators. The aim is to prioritise investments and resources for local services and work closely with the local communities and partner organisations to develop thriving, resilient communities. It follows an ‘asset-based’ approach by which the plan is to make best use of local physical and human resources (assets) and support the positive activities that local communities have and value. Thriving Places takes a partnership approach, bringing people together, from councillors, individual residents, businesses, community leaders, and third sector and public sector bodies. All partners work together to improve the local community infrastructure, with some attracting capital investment for local development. Many of the Thriving Places have identified ways of improving the circumstances and opportunities for local children, such as by setting up summer holiday programmes, family gatherings and clubs.

schools for building social inclusion in the local community. For instance, **Amsterdam** offers a subsidy for the development of ‘family schools’ that are based on an integrated and demand-driven approach, including enriching after-school activities for children and support for families and parents. **Brussels** launched a ‘School Contract’ programme in 2017 to promote access to school facilities (e.g. sports halls and playgrounds) for all local residents, including outside school hours, leading to better integration of the school in the neighbourhood, and improved safety and social cohesion in the area. The same applies to kindergartens in deprived areas in German cities such as **Leipzig**, where kindergartens are developed as children and family centres with extra resources for family education and networking.



2.3 Prevention and early intervention

Cities are well aware that poverty and deprivation in childhood has long-term effects on future opportunities, thus they realise the importance of identifying risk factors early on and reaching out with tailored support to children. Many cities have put in place services for the prevention and early intervention of child poverty, working in partnership with the third sector.

Besides living in a deprived area (discussed in the section above), there are three main groups of risk factors commonly identified by cities. Firstly, a key risk is economic vulnerability due to low family income. To address this risk, many cities have put in place income support, child benefits, free school meals, subsidising the cost of travel to school, social scholarships, reduced fees for childcare, among other assistance. Secondly, there are risk factors related to social family difficulties, such as the parenting stress, family conflict, domestic violence, or substance abuse. Thirdly, educational difficulties, usually stemming from the parents’ low level of education or even illiteracy, can affect children’s interest in school and ultimately lead to truancy or even school dropout.

Rotterdam’s evidence-based model for prevention and early intervention

Rotterdam’s municipal youth strategy aims to help children and young people grow up healthier, safer and with more chances in life. To put these goals into action, the city has built an evidence-based model for its strategy, called “Rotterdam is Growing”, which is the policy framework for 2015-2020, outlining 10 programmes, covering a wide scope from preparing parents-to-be to supporting children and young people aged 27 and under. The centre of this framework is the so-called ‘Factor model’, a scientific model that is an ecosystem which contains protective and risk factors that interact with child poverty, such as parental skills, social emotional competences of children, school performance, domestic violence, parent psychosocial and addiction problems, delinquency and other challenges. The aim is to identify the interventions that optimise protective factors and minimise risk factors to enable children and young people to grow up healthier, safer and with more opportunities. The Factor model is translated into 300 indicators published in ‘State of the Youth’, a yearly report on the situation of children and young people. The latest report shows that, as a result of this policy, children and young people in Rotterdam grow up safer and healthier and have more opportunities in life.



Role of preventative health services

Cities in western and northern European countries have in place universal maternal, newborn and child preventative health services. This usually takes the form of 'early assistance' to families by reaching out to mothers-to-be during pregnancy and followed by postnatal home visits to offer psychosocial support and health counselling. In German cities, such as **Hamburg** and **Leipzig**, the service is offered by 'family midwives', which is a service integrating health and family workers. In **Stockholm**, paediatric nurses together with family therapists visit families with newborns on six occasions during the first 18 months of a child's life. Such support is extended to nearly three years in cities in the Netherlands, such as in **Amsterdam**, **Rotterdam** and **Utrecht**, where the focus is on the first 1,000 days of life to promote healthy development of young children and help parents cope with the stress of parenting.

Ghent's use of preventative health services to inform any potential risks of child deprivation

A local team from the Flemish agency Kind & Gezin ('Child & Family') contacts every pregnant woman towards the end of her pregnancy to introduce and explain the agency's services, listen to the mother's/parents' questions and support needs, and prepare a case file for the child ('Child's booklet for health checks and vaccinations'). During the first months after birth, an agency nurse pays at least one home visit to follow up on the baby. This local team is part of the city's local network of services, and signals any risk of child deprivation (as per Ghent's 'Deprivation index'), which is followed up by social services with a tailored intervention offer to support the family in need.

Role of family education

Many cities have support services to help families develop parenting skills and overcome family conflicts or stressful situations. For example, in **Glasgow** there are over 60 family support agencies which provide family support through counselling sessions or group work. In **Ghent**, the Flemish 'Houses of the Child' is a network that coordinates, engages and stimulates local (semi-)public and private organisations that work for and with parents on parenting issues and offer support regarding education, youth care services, child daycare, youth services, social welfare services and local health services. In 2021 two additional services will be set up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in cooperation with 'walk-in' teams, which organise free activities for parents and children (e.g. parent groups, play groups, excursions, information sessions). Since 2019, there has been intensive cooperation between walk-in teams, childcare centres and preschools in working with families in deprived areas to increase childcare and preschool attendance.

Frankfurt's model for social-spatial family education

Frankfurt places a special emphasis on risk prevention and promoting equal opportunities for participation for all families. The city works on three pillars. Firstly, local youth welfare offices develop prevention targets for each neighbourhood and, in cooperation with family education centres, develop suitable offers. Secondly, a focus is placed on family networks through institutionalised cooperation between daycare centres and family education to support the opening of children and family centres as social spaces. Thirdly, family education strengthens its community-oriented approach by looking at the specific needs of families in each individual neighbourhood. Together with other local actors, it then develops family education programmes.





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Preventing absenteeism and school dropout

Cities invest a lot of resources in reinforcing the key role of schools in child poverty prevention and early intervention. In **Malmo**, for instance, schools work on early detection of learning disabilities or social challenges of children and match tailored support accordingly. In **Espoo**, child poverty issues are integrated in the equality plan of each school.

Many cities work hard to prevent school dropout. One of the most common approaches is to prevent and reduce school absenteeism through specific programmes in which social services work closely with schools, children and families.

Madrid's truancy programme is carried out by 59 social educators, who in 2019 helped 5,680 children to improve their school attendance. In addition, **Stockholm** works with the police to prevent children and young people from engaging in criminal activity.

Role of local social services

Through their outreach field work, local social services play a key role in identifying children and families at risk of poverty or exclusion, understanding their individual needs and challenges, and referring them and/or accompanying them to the different support services available in the city. Children at risk can be identified either through direct requests by families for support from local social services or direct referrals from schools and other services (family centres, healthcare services, etc).

A strong collaboration between local social services and local health providers, schools, childcare providers, youth work and leisure activity providers, who are in direct contact with children and their families, is vital to sharing information and strategies to prevent child poverty risk and protect children. **Milan** has developed a handbook for collaboration between educational, childcare, and social services and judicial authorities. In **Ghent**, the detection of risk factors can be done by anyone in the local network of services, as all local services are required to take into account the broad context of the people they work with. In this way, risk factors such as housing situation, school attendance or family conflict are frequently detected and addressed either by the given service or in cooperation or reference to other specialised services. Key players for early detection or risks are childcare workers, school mediators, and local child and youth initiative fieldworkers. **Madrid** developed the 'Work Teams for Children and Families' initiative in each of the 38 municipal social services centres across its 21 districts. These teams are made up of social workers, psychologists, and other professionals, and analyse the situations of children in vulnerable situations and design the necessary interventions and resources in each case. They consider a wide range of risk factors such as difficulties in schooling and work-life balance, scarce financial resources, family conflict, neglect of care, and child abuse.

Warsaw's model for integrating services into the local support system

The local support system in Warsaw (LSS) ensures a comprehensive offer of services tailored to the needs of a family at risk of social exclusion. The process is supported by a family assistant who accompanies the family in overcoming a difficult life situation. The local support system includes public and non-public (NGO) service providers, such as: one or more social workers, educators, psychologists, psychotherapists, teachers, community nurses, doctors, etc. At the same time, LSS uses resources that are available in the district or city, e.g. specialist counselling systems and access to local culture, recreation and sports facilities. The emphasis is to build a supportive environment and a social support network, through the help of the family assistant, to engage children in healthy and confidence-building activities. The key point is to offer alternative patterns than those observed in the home environment and help the family adapt in order to foster resilience and well-being. To organise support within the LSS system, the city uses a map of the areas and districts where social problems have accumulated.

2.4 Child participation

Many cities invest considerable efforts to ensure children's voices are heard in the decisions that affect them. **Three quarters of cities in our sample have set up specific structures or processes for the participation of children and young people in their city's policies.** The most common approaches are:

- Children's parliament and/or youth council
- Participatory processes ranging from city-wide surveys of children's needs and challenges to focus groups of children to co-create ideas for new policies
- Participatory budgeting with children
- Childproofing municipal policies to assess the impact on children.

A quarter of cities in our sample are still to develop a systematic child participation approach but have in place mechanisms to take children's views into account in the design and delivery of the services most relevant to them, especially in education, through pupils' councils or boards in every school.

Children and youth councils

Half of the cities surveyed (17 of 35) reported having in place a children's parliament or youth council; some even have a children's mayor (**Amsterdam**) or local child ombudsman (**Stockholm**). They advise the city council on decisions that directly affect children. They meet once or several times a year with the city mayor and the city council to discuss children's policy ideas for making the city more child-friendly. Notably, in **Tampere**, the youth council has representatives on the city's municipal council. Some cities, such as **Bristol** and **Glasgow**, have an additional Council for Children in Care to ensure the voices of children in institutional care are heard in order to improve policies for public care and support services.

Participatory processes

One in three cities in our sample (13 of 35) have put in place participatory processes to develop city policies together with young people, often involving schools and civil society organisations reaching out to as many children as possible, maximising diversity. For example, **Barcelona** runs a programme called 'The children have their say', which involves a broad,

representative participation process in the ten districts that leads to a Children's Political Agenda of interests and needs conveyed to the local government.

Madrid has a Participation Commission for Children and Adolescents in each city district to formulate ideas and proposals for new policies to present to elected city politicians at district and city council level. **Ghent** adopts a strategic approach focusing on co-creation of city policies with children, emphasising the involvement of children from disadvantaged groups. **Leeds** took an innovative approach to develop a panel of 'experts by experience': low-income young people and parents conduct peer research concerning the impact of poverty on education and employment prospects and help develop the city's child poverty strategy.



Vienna's participation process to set up the city's strategy for children

Vienna organised a broad participation process with children and young people to develop the city's first-ever Children and Youth Strategy. The city consulted over 22,000 children and young people who participated as members of their classes or other groups in over 1,300 workshops held by educators, youth workers, teachers, social workers and volunteers. Children were asked what works well in Vienna and what could be improved. The inputs were analysed by a social science institute. Nine topics were identified as the most relevant, including the environment, mobility, safety, health and well-being. A children and youth advisory board was then invited to discuss and prioritise ideas for new policies, which were then translated into 193 measures cutting across all departments of the city administration, forming a common vision to make Vienna a child-friendly city. All city departments are expected to implement the 193 measures by 2025. In addition, the city will allocate a participatory children's and youth budget of €1 million per year and set up a children's and youth parliament to monitor progress.

Read more here: bit.ly/CYPVienna

Participatory budgeting

Five cities (Braga, Oulu, Rubi, Tampere and Vienna) implement participatory budgeting with children. For example, in 2020, **Tampere** ran a participatory process to gather ideas from children and young people for new projects in the city, followed by online voting for project ideas and their implementation through total funding of €450,000 from the municipal budget. In **Rubi**, the Council for Children vote on project ideas funded by €50,000 from the municipal budget.

Coordinating child participation in the city

Some cities have set up a dedicated office for children and youth participation within their city administration. **Bristol** has a dedicated youth participation team within the city council that supports a wide range of youth participation initiatives, including Bristol City Youth Council and Mayors, the Children in Care Council, the Listening Partnership, Young Carers Voice, and others. **Glasgow** has established the post of Child Poverty Coordinator to connect with and meaningfully involve children and families with experience of poverty in the city's work to tackle child poverty. **Leipzig** has a coordinating office for children and youth participation in the department of youth, schools and democracy.

Childproofing of municipal policies and services

There is a new trend in cities to 'childproof' municipal policies and decisions before adopting them: to assess their potential impact on children in view of maximising positive impacts and avoiding any detrimental impact.

For example, **Espoo** adopts a 'Human Impact Assessment' of all its municipal policy proposals, and the perspectives of children and young people are part of this assessment. In **Stockholm**, everyone working for the city administration needs to consider the child perspective before making any decisions as part of ex ante impact assessment of all policies and programmes. Moreover, all of the city's social welfare services working with children or families have a dedicated coordinator for children's rights to keep the focus on the best interests of the child in every decision that may affect them. In **Oulu**, city staff are trained to use a participatory method (*Lapset puheeksi*), a systematic approach to discussing individual needs and interests with children and their families and adapting interventions accordingly.

2.5 Cooperation with other cities and levels of government

Four out of five cities in our sample (28 of 35) are involved in some form of cooperation or collaboration with other cities or other levels of governments on child poverty policies or projects:

- 23 cities are reportedly collaborating with the regional and/or national authorities on child poverty measures. Some cities are working with the national government in developing and implementing a strategic plan to combat poverty with a specific focus on child poverty (**Brussels**) or the national strategy on children's rights (**Zagreb**). Besides this, many cities work in partnership with childcare institutions, schools, healthcare providers, social services and other services, which requires coordination between local, regional and national actors and their services, yet this can still be improved for ensuring even better synergies of efforts.
- 13 cities reported working with other cities from their country on common challenges of child poverty. For example, **Ghent** co-founded the Flemish Network of Child and Youth Friendly Cities in 2019 to help other Flemish cities develop a strategy for child and youth friendly policies.
- 10 cities are involved in EU-level projects, initiatives or organisations. For example, **Brussels** took part in the Urban Agenda Partnership on Urban poverty that produced in 2018 an action plan to fight urban poverty in the EU with one priority action on tackling child poverty. Some cities (**Ghent**, **Ljubljana**) are involved in the activities of the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), which inspired them to adopt a whole-family approach in the services they offer. Other cities reported being involved in EU-funded projects, ranging from Interreg to Erasmus+ and others.

One in five cities in our sample (7 of 35) are not yet involved in any sort of collaboration at any level but are interested in starting cooperation. In this regard, many find added value in the new Eurocities Working Group on Children and Young people established in 2020, which gathers over 50 cities from across 20 European countries to work together and learn from each other on child poverty and other child policy related issues.

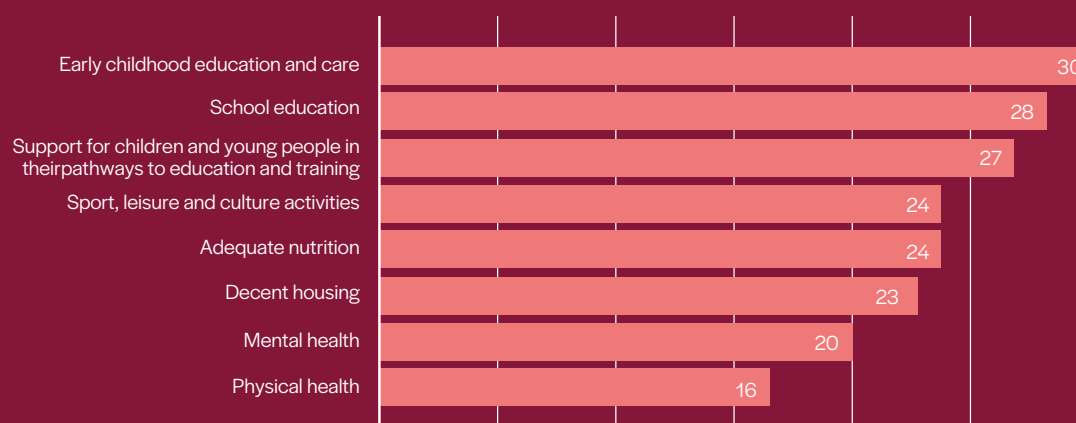


3. Main areas of interventions

Cities share many local priorities in the fight against child poverty. Essential areas include the following:

- **Promoting education at all stages of life** is essential to preventing poverty and minimising the risk of social exclusion. The vast majority of cities surveyed (86%) consider early childhood education and care, together with school education, and support for children and young people in their pathways to education and training, to be crucial areas of focus for improving equal access and inclusion.
- **Promotion of sport, leisure and culture activities** (69%) is seen as important by most cities.
- **Adequate nutrition** (69% of surveyed cities) is a priority area for the majority of cities.
- **Support for access to quality housing** (66% of surveyed cities) is especially important in big cities.
- Intervention in the areas of **physical and mental health** are considered a priority by at least half of the cities who took part in the survey (46% and 57% respectively).

Which are the key areas of intervention in your city to prevent/combat child poverty?



Note: data in the table shows the number of cities that reported each area of intervention. Each city reported more than one area.

3.1 Access, quality and affordability of childcare and family support services

Every city believes ECEC services are essential to reducing inequalities and providing equal opportunities to every child starting from an early age. The majority of cities implement childcare services by direct management or via an integrated private public system. Access to childcare services is provided for free or through subsidised fees based on family income. Most cities apply a family-centred approach, developing not only ECEC services but also family centres, focusing on a holistic approach to family needs. To support this holistic approach, many cities have developed a set of policies and services for families and children which not only provide standardised services (of which they guarantee quality, affordability and access) but also innovative ways to reach families in isolation and in need.

Early childhood education and care services

Ghent tested and implemented various measures to make childcare more accessible, more inclusive and of better quality for all preschoolers, following the European Recommendation.⁴ This included situating childcare centres closer to home, reserving places for disadvantaged families, linking childcare services and welfare organisations, and improving quality of services through staff training. Moreover, the city developed a Childcare Point in order to create a more inclusive city-wide system of enrolment.

Another interesting approach is the services known as 'open preschools' in **Malmo**: they provide an initial insight into an educational preschool environment and comprise a step toward regular preschool.

They include a service (Hera) dedicated to newly or recently arrived migrants and provide language learning. Self-evaluation activities are one of the core elements of the **Oulu** ECEC services. The activities are conducted with the direct participation of children and families and ensure the services are developed through a reflexive approach, open to discussion and dialogue.

Family support services

Many cities provide family centres, such as in **Ljubljana** or **Madrid**, with a wide variety of centres covering different needs and target groups, ranging from family support centres to family meetings points and parental intervention centres or parent academy (as in **Oulu**). Most of these services develop a multi-professional approach to respond to complex family needs in an integrated way.

3.2 Nutrition

The majority of cities offer nutrition and health support for all children through universal services provided in schools, preschools, kindergartens, such as free meals or specific activities to improve children's health. Regarding nutrition and healthy food promotion, **Amsterdam, Utrecht, Leeds, Milano, Warsaw, Rotterdam, Frankfurt** are all developing specific city programmes. **Amsterdam** set up the 'Healthy Weight Program' in which primary schools are encouraged to become 'Healthy Schools'. To become a healthy school, eight specific goals need to be met which, among others, include the following: health is permanently on the agenda; effort is made by the school and parents; there is a healthy food policy at school; and there are enough gym classes.

⁴ Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems.



3.3 Mental and physical health

All cities provide children with mental health services in order to support those in need. Moreover, in many cities, children receive regular check-ups to assess the general state of their mental and physical health. These activities take place not only in schools but also in preschools and kindergartens, highlighting the important preventative role of early childhood education and care services.

Many cities are developing spaces and activities to promote physical health. For example, **Frankfurt**, through the city's Green Belt Programme, developed parks, comic art, learning stations, nature reserves, forest playgrounds and over 600 playgrounds. The specially created Playground Programme run by the city's Children Office also ensures children's active participation in the playgrounds' co-creation.

Utrecht's 'Healthy Urban Living for Everyone' is a strategic programme that allows different departments to work together toward the common goal of ensuring healthy living for all citizens. This approach allows for the creation of more customised and adequate solutions. For example, for children and families with mental health illnesses, the approach is focused on allowing children to stay in their own environment as much as possible, e.g. staying with friends or at school.

Some cities are also developing projects and activities for certain target groups. For example, **Frankfurt** is developing a Multicultural Health Programme for migrants (KoGi). Run by the city's department of health, the programme aims to make healthcare more accessible to marginalised communities, especially to migrant communities or religious minorities. The programme consists of training volunteers from these communities concerning health and the healthcare system so they can act as 'health guides' in local communities, thus establishing peer-led access to healthcare information and services. In 2019, the scope of the programme was extended to include a child-specific training. The department of health conducted surveys in elementary schools and daycare centres, among children and adults, to set the focus of the training, which will also include a module on children's rights. The contents and framework of the child-specific training are being developed in cooperation with the programme's established 'health guides'.

3.4 Safe and adequate housing and living environment

Most cities provide a system of housing support to all citizens in need, paying specific attention to families with children in difficult circumstances. Some cities have developed strategic housing plans, monitoring gaps and areas for improvement, such as **Malmö**, which monitors the level of homelessness every six years. Other cities are implementing customised solutions to meet the needs of families and avoid over-reliance on state benefits, empowering families to become autonomous and find sustainable solutions.

Leeds has introduced an initiative known as Selective Licensing to tackle poor housing conditions but also to address individual and family needs in order to make tenancies more sustainable and fit for purpose. The initiative requires landlords in targeted poorer areas to have a licence to operate, which will improve the quality of rented accommodation, as landlords will need to meet certain quality criteria and be subject to licence inspections.

Glasgow is developing its Housing Strategy and Glasgow Standard, which commits to ensuring that people across the city have safe, affordable and secure housing. The city also has a wide Registered Social Landlord network with over 30 housing associations, many of which are committed to community-led regeneration to ensure children and families are safe, secure and happy in their tenancies.

Green, safe and child friendly spaces

Some cities also look beyond housing to improve the living environment in the neighbourhood and ensure healthy, green and safe living places for children and families. **Barcelona** has developed a Strategic Game Plan for its public spaces. Play-oriented interventions are being carried out for children in the recently pedestrianised areas, having reclaimed streets from cars through the novel urban planning approach called 'superblocks'.⁵ Areas near schools are also being adapted to reduce air and noise pollution.

⁵ Superblocks are nine-block neighbourhoods whose streets are reserved for local residents and services and vehicle speed is limited to 10 km/hr. More information at: eurocities.eu/stories/reclaiming-the-streets/

3.5 Participation in sports, culture and leisure activities

Quality and equality

Cities dedicate a lot of resources to supporting sport, culture and leisure activities for children and young people, in line with the general principle of focusing on quality and equality. In particular, cities work with other relevant stakeholders (private sector, associations, NGOs) in order to improve the quality of activities and guarantee that all children have access to these opportunities.

Some cities have put in place city cards or bonuses which give free access to cultural events, theatres, museums and regular sports or cultural activities, such as **Madrid's** Jobo Culture Bonus, **Rotterdam's** Pas and **Oulu's** Culture for All Card. Other cities focus on funding programmes dedicated to particular periods of the year when schools are closed, such as summer camps and holiday camps. Whatever the programme or project, it is evident that cities consider sport, culture and leisure activities important ways to support the inclusion of children from disadvantaged families.

Use of common spaces for sports and leisure

Another important point concerns common spaces that are available for children, such as libraries, sports centres, swimming pools and outdoor spaces. For instance, **Madrid** has created a network of 25 toy libraries and a specific webpage with all cultural activities for children and families. The majority of cities surveyed guarantee free or discounted fees for low-income families to access these spaces, often through city cards. For example, **Zagreb** organises 'the weekend in sport hall initiative' which aims to attract as many children as possible to participate in organised forms of sports activities. In fact, the majority of cities consider sports as key to promoting good physical and mental health and well-being of children and young people, building social inclusion and preventing risky behaviours (violence, bullying, etc.).

Reading

Regarding cultural activities, it is important to underline the important role of libraries and reading promotion activities fostered through particular programmes by cities such as Zagreb, Milan and Gothenburg.

Promoting reading from an early age is a key priority in many cities, as reading is viewed as an important way to increase motivation for learning and doing well in school, with long-term benefits on children's life prospects. **Milan** has created a group of 200 reading ambassadors who aim to promote reading to all families and children who are enrolled in kindergartens and preschools. **Gothenburg's** 'The city where we read to our children' programme was implemented in all city districts in partnership with local entities, including libraries, preschools and family centres. As part of the programme, the city coordinated a two-year Erasmus+ project (2017-2019) to share knowledge about reading promotion with four other cities, **Bristol, Brussels, Milan** and **Turku**.

Innovative approaches

Many cities have created local networks made up of different stakeholders who work together to implement new and innovative projects. For example, **Utrecht** set up Sport Gear Rent System. **Tampere** works with a range of partners to provide sports and arts activities such as theatre, floorball, cooking, coding, and ice hockey, which all help boost the participation of vulnerable children. Another interesting initiative comes from **Malmö**: the 'Companion Service' is a personalised service that encourages an active social life. It involves a companion, provided by the city, who can accompany the individual to social activities as well as cultural, sports and leisure activities. The companion can serve as a friend to join in leisure activities, give advice in daily situations and make it easier for the individual to live independently.





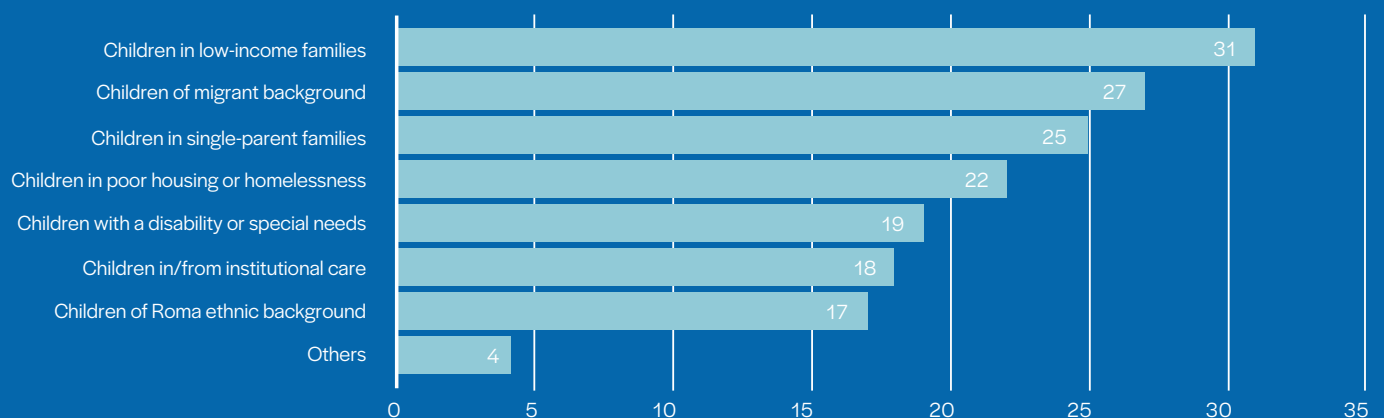
4. Targeted support for children in need

Main groups at risk of child poverty

Cities identified as particularly vulnerable children:

- In low-income families;
- With a migrant background, in particular unaccompanied minors (refugee children);
- In single-parent families;
- In poor housing or who are homeless;
- With a disability or special needs;
- In/emerging from institutional care;
- Who are Roma;
- Included as 'Others' in the chart below: children whose parents have additional vulnerabilities such as (mental) health conditions or addictions; minors; children from large families.

Which are the main groups of children in need you support with your municipal measures?



Note: data in the table shows the number of cities that reported each group. Each city reported more than one group.

4.1 Support for children in precarious families

Children and families in precarious situations are often in need of multilevel support. This can include income or financial support, social housing, food aid and/or subsidised leisure activities.

Family income support

The majority of cities provide financial and income support to families who live in a precarious situation, based on local criteria of defining the precarious situations. For example, to better understand the needs of its citizens, the city of **Ghent** set up a Poverty Policy Cell with different stakeholders to process data on poverty and produce an inventory of poverty indicators. On the basis of this data, the city then elaborates its anti-poverty policy, **tailored to the needs of each neighbourhood**.

When it comes to administering income support, **Amsterdam**, for instance, assists families with income and budget management, debt restructuring and financial information sessions. Single parents can also benefit from a weekly drop-in session where information about services and their availability is provided, while low-income families can apply for a large number of social schemes. **Espoo's** social services provide supplementary and preventive income support, which is claimed by approximately 7% of all families with children living in the city. Moreover, **Espoo and Oulu** offer social lending and low-interest loans as part of the social care system with the aim of preventing debt and economic exclusion.

In **Malmo** and **Stockholm**, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency offers a number of social insurance benefits, such as child allowance and parental benefits, for families with children. In addition to this, families in a precarious situation can also apply for supplementary income support offered by the municipalities themselves to cover basic purchases, housing costs or medical expenses, as well as receive budgetary and debt counselling.

Among a wide array of different measures, **Vienna** provides individuals in precarious situations with means-tested basic benefits with the aim of combating poverty and promoting social inclusion. Children and young people represent over a third of the recipients of these benefits. Moreover, the city also grants subsidies to low-income households in exceptional circumstances and to cover basic costs.

Child benefits are a common municipal policy to combat child and family poverty. **Barcelona** has put in place since 2015 the 'Fons 0-16' measure that involves a transfer of €100/month/child that aims to cover specific children's needs (beyond family needs). The fund is distributed through social services once the family requests it and meets the requirements. An additional €100 is added for single-parent families.

Many cities, such as **Amsterdam, Rubi, Thessaloniki** and **Zagreb**, also provide food aid and basic material assistance to families in need. Food banks are commonly used by cities as a basic support service.

Housing and shelter support

In responding to the basic needs of families in precarious situations, the majority of cities offer housing and shelter support or have specific measures in the field of precarious housing situations. Many of the cities, such as **Zagreb**, provide specific financial support for housing-related costs, for instance subsidising rents or heating costs. Many others help families in precarious situations to access social housing. **Madrid** focuses on children's interests and family cohesion by providing housing for precarious families. For vulnerable women, the city provides temporary housing and support for women with children aged four and under. They are often accompanied by psychosocial and educational assistance and aim to make such single-parent families economically autonomous.

Vienna provides support for families with children in case of upcoming eviction. **Milan** similarly supports families with costs related to housing, including specific support for no-fault or partial-fault delays in paying rent. Large families are also entitled to more specific financial contributions. **Ljubljana's** public housing fund ensures the running of a special service to prevent the eviction of families from their homes and finances an NGO which provides education, entertainment and support for children and families in newly inhabited housing projects.



Leisure activities

In addition to covering the basic needs of children of families in a precarious situation, multiple cities also make sure that they are included in social and leisure activities.

Leeds is implementing a comprehensive holiday scheme for the city's young residents, with both online and offline activities that are compliant with social distancing measures. With national-level funding, the city delivered a scheme across 30 third-sector community groups, 14 schools' groups and seven council community hubs. **Vienna** provides affordable childcare during summer holidays with its so-called 'Summer City Camps', which offer to school children aged six to 17 an extensive leisure-time and educational programme, including free German language courses and tutoring for children. Furthermore, Vienna offers culture and leisure courses (culture, arts, creative workshops, sports, etc.), mostly free of charge, for children aged six to 13 during school holidays.

Similarly, **Zagreb** offers holidays for children whose parents benefit from social welfare. In addition, the city distributes special gift packages for Easter. In **Rubi** and **Brno**, children can benefit from scholarships or social assistance for accessing extracurricular or sports activities.

4.2 Support for children from a migrant background

Children with a migrant background need additional support services for their well-being and to facilitate their integration and inclusion in society. To this end, a large majority of cities have put in place specific support offers, ranging from targeted educational support to guidance and social orientation courses and additional assistance for unaccompanied children or young people.

Targeted educational support

Education is crucial in preparing children for the local job market, providing them with long-term prospects and reducing their risk of poverty. Cities have recognised the need for targeted educational support, in schools and otherwise, to cater to the particular needs of children from a migrant background.

One of the main challenges faced by children from a migrant background is a lack of language skills. Numerous cities have therefore put in place dedicated language classes that help these children develop the language skills needed to participate in regular school education. This is even more necessary for recently arrived migrant children, and often forms part of a broader municipal approach to receiving migrant children and families. Many cities implement such preparatory language courses in a way that directly transitions into regular education.

Ghent has dedicated schools, supported by the Centre for Education, where newcomers aged 12 to 18 can learn Dutch for a full school year, after which they move on to be included in the regular education system. **Oulu** has classes at dedicated schools to offer such preparatory education with a view to inclusion into mainstream education structures. **Rubi** implements an inclusive approach to integrating migrant children in the regular education system. The city has special reception classrooms, where migrant pupils receive additional support in learning the language, while other subjects are taught in mainstream classes together with other students.

Several cities address the need to preserve and cultivate the mother tongues of children with a migrant background. **Espoo and Tampere** make it possible for students to receive lessons in more than 40 different languages. **Malmo** offers students the opportunity for tutoring in their own language, with the explicit purpose of improving their chances of reaching their educational goals.

Guidance and social orientation

Migrant children and young people, as well as their migrant families, may have specific guidance needs that differ from those of other groups of migrants. Therefore, many cities have put in place strategies that ensure that they can access the services they need.

Amsterdam is piloting the use of a specialised parent and child team in an asylum reception centre.

This team consists of two parenting consultants and one child psychologist and assists the families living in the centre, by providing information on healthcare, education, parenting support and trauma treatment. **Stockholm** similarly provides guidance to newly arrived families by informing them about the structure of the community and activities for children in the local area.

In **Ghent**, 15-to-19-year-old newcomers are accompanied by way of a tailored trajectory including social orientation courses, extracurricular activities, and individual counselling. For young people with an international protection status, the city offers interdisciplinary support that includes psychoeducation, identity and personality development and financial self-reliance.

Support to unaccompanied minors

Unaccompanied minors are one group of migrant children that need greater support because they migrate without family relatives and are at increased risk of exploitation. The majority of cities recognise the vulnerabilities of unaccompanied minors and have therefore installed comprehensive care systems to meet their needs. Several cities assign a specific support person or family for each unaccompanied minor.

Oulu develops personal integration plans and in-house guidance services for unaccompanied minors, as well as home placements or a host family. **Tampere** houses unaccompanied minors in 'Family Group Homes', where each child is assigned a personal counsellor (who helps and supports the child in everyday life), takes language classes, engages in free-time activities, and benefits from the support of a nurse who can refer the child to special healthcare services. Similarly, **Stockholm** provides housing and additional assistance such as homework support and leisure activities. In **Madrid**, a dedicated project aims to guarantee the comprehensive care for unaccompanied minors that are at risk of exclusion.

With this project, the city wants to facilitate their education, social, cultural and labour integration process. **Bristol** runs a 'Landlord scheme' which offers £100 more (than market rate) in rent per month to landlords who provide high-quality housing to refugees, especially refugee families with children.

4.3 Support for children in or coming from institutional care

Most cities support children in or coming from institutional care through specific and general services and benefits to sustain their growth and start an independent life. The objectives shared by many cities are intended to limit the number of children in institutional care and support them in developing their own path.

Preventative approach

In order to achieve these objectives, cities try to prevent both emergency situations and institutional care solutions, by proposing kinship care or foster homes. Many cities provide support for children in institutional care, guaranteeing them free access to all city services. **Braga**, for instance, provides free use of municipal swimming pools, cultural/sports spaces, municipal equipment and transport.

Even though not all cities are responsible for children in institutional care (they can be under regional competence, as in Belgium and Spain), cities still play a role in supporting them via their specialised social and educational services.

Support to develop their own independent life

Moreover, many cities take care of children when they leave institutional care, helping them to develop their own independent life. The main activities provided by cities are oriented around the support needed to find employment, an adequate educational pathway, and different and customised housing solutions (e.g. temporary houses, apartments rented by the city).

Notably, in cities in **Germany**, child and youth welfare does not end when the child becomes an adult. Every young person has the right to receive support for their development and to be educated to become a responsible and socially capable person. These goals are clearly not achieved upon coming of age but are issues for all young adults. If there is still a need in the areas of personality development and independent living when a child or young person in inpatient care comes of age, inpatient help (so-called 'help for young adults') continues into adulthood. The aim is to enable the young person to lead their life independently and promote their personal development. Assistance is provided until the young person reaches the age of 21. In justified individual cases, assistance can continue beyond this age. The goal of this assistance is always the transition into adult life, which often includes the establishment of a post-assistance support system.

Participation

Glasgow has set up a multi-agency Youth Justice Strategy Group with representatives from statutory services and the third sector which have joint responsibility for the planning and strategic development of services to help young people achieve the best outcomes in life. The Group strives for effective, efficient and evidence-based service provision in local communities – that is, ensuring that city services have been subjected to research and scrutiny, been shown to work, and deliver the best outcomes at the lowest possible cost to the public purse.⁶

4.4 Support for children with disabilities or special needs

Services for children with disabilities, starting from early age

All cities support children with disabilities with a variety of services from educational support in schools or extracurricular activities to specialist services. In most cities, children with disabilities are integrated in regular classes, but in some cities it is also possible to create special classes. The support actually starts from early childhood by providing specialised training to staff in nurseries and preschools so they are able to create a playing and learning environment inclusive for all. For example, **Barcelona** offers Centres for Child Development and Early Care, which are specialised services that care for children aged six and under who have a developmental disorder or who are at risk of suffering from one, as well as their families. They offer a set of preventive, detection, diagnostic and therapeutic intervention actions, all of an interdisciplinary nature, from the moment of conception until the child reaches the age of six, therefore covering the prenatal, postnatal and early childhood stages; an interdisciplinary team of child development experts tends to any type of disorder and intervenes comprehensively to address the needs of the child and the family. Parent support is considered a key element in many cities such as **Amsterdam**, which provides help and advice about parenting, growing up, health and development (Parent and Child Teams).

Physical barriers and general accessibility

Physical barriers and general inaccessibility are considered an important issue by many cities, given that they are obstacles to inclusion in schools and other educational facilities. **Brno** instituted the Barrier-Free Brno Advisory Board of the Brno City Council. Within the framework of Education, Youth and Sports Department projects, the revitalisation of schools and their immediate surroundings was carried out to meet the conditions of barrier-free accessibility.

Right of communication and participation

Malmö enhanced accessibility through measures focusing on communication and participation, where one key focus is the use of communication support based on individual needs and conditions. One of the main tasks is to implement communication passes, a tool that maps every child's communication needs in order to ensure that communication between child and personnel proceeds smoothly and can be developed further. Different digital solutions and tools are also under development to improve accessibility. Some cities also designate key persons such as a Disability Coordinator (**Oulu**) or Disability Manager (**Milan**), who addresses city service accessibility issues.

Some cities develop an integrated and customised approach to addressing every child's needs and desires in a more adequate way. **Düsseldorf** offers a wide range of services from interdisciplinary early education to autism therapies or school assistance to the supply of mobility or hearing aids or housing adjustments. **Vienna** supports children with disabilities and special educational needs with counselling services and home visiting services.

The direct participation of disabled children and their families is considered a key element by many cities, such as **Glasgow**, whose Glasgow Disability Alliance is a key city-wide organisation that provides support to people with disabilities, increasing their confidence and ensuring they are able to meaningfully participate in decision-making spaces.



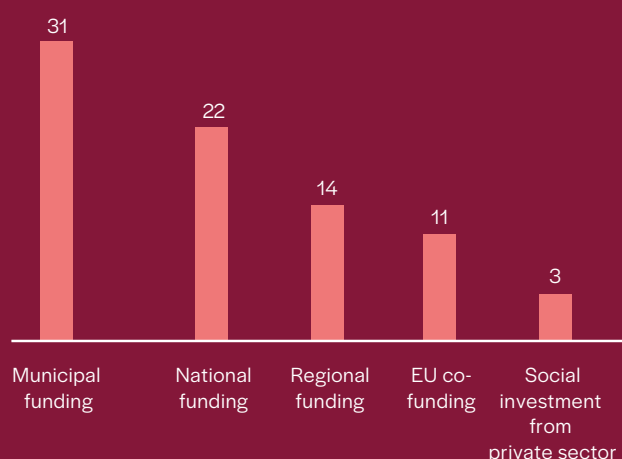
⁶ <http://cjjg-annualreport.co.uk/news/>

5. Budgeting

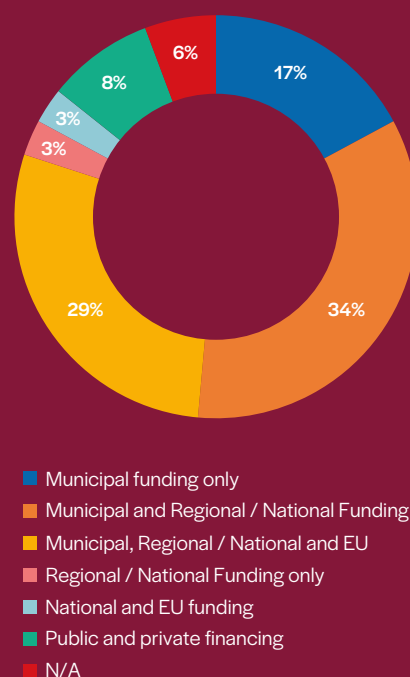
Most cities use municipal and/or national budget resources in support of local measures and services to reduce child poverty. Some cities also use EU funding, particularly the European Social Fund (ESF). A minority of cities also uses social investment from the private sector, such as foundations.



How are the child poverty reduction measures financed in your city?



Note: data in the first graph shows the number of cities that reported each source of funding (multiple answers possible) while the second graph shows the percentage of cities reporting each combination of funding sources (only one option possible)



5.1 Funding sources

Municipal funding is by far the most common source of funding used by cities in support of local measures to prevent and/or combat child poverty. Nearly all cities in our survey (31 of 35) allocate part of their city budget to child poverty reduction programmes and related services. However, most cities combine municipal funding with regional and/or national funding and sometimes also with EU co-funding. Only 17% of cities (6 of 35) reported using *only* municipal funding, while 34% use municipal funding together with funding received from regional or national authorities. Moreover, 29% of the surveyed cities (10 of 35) combine municipal and/or regional/national funding with EU funding. A few cities (5 of 35) also receive financial support from the private sector.

EU funding

Nearly a third of cities receive EU funding support for child poverty measures or projects at local level. Most of the support comes from the European Social Fund (ESF), but some cities also use funding from the European Regional Development Fund, FEAD, Interreg, Erasmus or the Urban Innovative Actions.

For example, **Malmo** received ESF support for its 'Hela Familjen' project. This helped 800 families who had been receiving financial support for 24 months to become self-sufficient, through a holistic approach targeted at improving their employability and education prospects. This helped alleviate family poverty, and therefore children's risk of vulnerability and exclusion was much reduced. Nearly half of this programme's budget (€1.45 million of €3.09 million) was financed through the ESF.

Oulu improved its child support strategy with the help of the European Regional Development Fund, and **Brno** implemented its Obědy do škol programme, whereby it provides school lunches, with support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). **Göteborg** received support from Erasmus+ for its project to promote reading among children and parents. **Milan** is running an Urban Innovative Project 'Wishing MI' with EU co-funding as well as a project to 'Reinforce Educators, Empower Children' with support from the Rights, Equality and Citizenship EU programme. **Ghent** has a team of 'strategic funding officers' who support the city's work on EU projects. For example, Ghent childcare services are involved in an Interreg project with ten partners from four countries to provide and promote access to childcare and employment (PACE).

This is why the budget figures in this section are based on estimates, as reported by the surveyed cities, and are by no means comparable between cities given the differences in population size and in the competences that cities have in relation to the regional and national levels, according to which the size of the budget can vary significantly.

Overall, cities' financial efforts to mitigate child poverty are channelled either through earmarked budgets for this purpose, and/or in combination with other social inclusion programmes, and often, also as part of broader budgeting for social and welfare services. This reflects that in most cases, cities adopt a holistic approach to child poverty, as their budget allocations cover various areas of intervention ranging from childcare and education to healthcare, social services and housing support, among others.

5.2 Budget allocation for child poverty

With regards to the budget allocated to fighting child poverty at a municipal level, the total investment varies across cities. It should be noted that many cities find it difficult to calculate the exact budget allocation because the budget is spread across many different services and programmes that together contribute to the city's work on child poverty.

Six cities (**Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bristol, Madrid, Glasgow and Utrecht**) reported having an earmarked budget for measures aimed at children in poverty, but this does not reflect the full amount invested by those cities in fighting child poverty. To get to their total budget allocation, one should also add the municipal investments in essential services for children (e.g. childcare) and prevention programmes (e.g. vaccination) that together foster children's well-being and equal opportunities.

Oulu's example of making the city budget child-responsive

Oulu is adapting its €532-million budget allocated to children and youth under 18 to make it more responsive to the needs of children and their families. The city's goal is to increase focus on children's everyday growth and development environments (home, daycare, school, free time), adding more preventative than special services as well as more family-oriented services and increasing collaboration between various services. To work on these goals, the city examined both total costs and costs by categories of services, differentiating between early preventative and universal services (early childcare and maternity clinics), targeted support services (child and family temporary support or care, e.g. family social work and special needs education) and intensified support services (24-hour institutional care). The city consulted with children and families who use municipal services and correlated results with welfare indicators at local, regional and national levels. In this way, the city was able to change the structure of its budget and increase funds for preventative services. The city also increased funding for more family social workers, smaller supportive learning groups at schools and more social welfare staff. To integrate various services, the city increased focus on welfare maternity clinics, 'welfare schools' and more structured child-centred discussions with families and children.

For example, **Barcelona** estimates that it spends about €50 million annually to combat child poverty and an additional €73 million in public childcare services for children aged two and under. **Amsterdam** reported an annual budget of around €20 million for actions against child poverty, which it then complements with €300 million for promoting the healthcare of children and young people (preventative approach) and another €111.5 million to support families in need as part of the city's broader poverty reduction actions. **Madrid** has a four-year Local Plan for Children and Adolescents, with an estimated annual budget of over €208 million.

However, most cities do not have a specific budget for fighting child poverty, because they approach this objective holistically across many different city departments and services. Resources to fight child poverty come from a combination of budget lines from the municipal budget, primarily investments in childcare, education, general strategies to fight poverty in the city, and the overall budget for social and welfare services. Cities report that financial support for the alleviation of child poverty is often part of larger budget allocations. **Ghent** estimates a total of €144.5 million is invested annually to support children in need, split mainly between education services (€50 million for childcare services) and social services that implement the plan to tackle the city's poverty and not exclusively children's (€65 million). In **Tampere**, the estimated budget reported is €100 million for 2020.

This covers welfare services including maternity clinics, child health centres, preventative healthcare in schools, family support social services, child psychiatry services, full-time child-carer support, non-institutional care and foster care.

Leipzig and **Dusseldorf** reported the highest estimated budgets, approximately €600 million each, for child and youth welfare services including childcare, educational support, youth work, child and family centres.

In addition to the budget allocation considered so far, another area to note is the municipal investment in public infrastructure for children and their families. In their municipal budget, most cities differentiate between investment in people and investment in public infrastructure. In **Leipzig**, for example, the budget allocated to the renewal of public infrastructure is not directly part of the funds reserved for child and youth welfare but does have a positive impact on it, as a further €813 million in municipal and regional funds will further the construction of new schools between 2018 and 2023. **Ljubljana** allocated €93 million to early childhood education and care services in 2020, including €26 million for the renovation of its kindergartens and schools in order to make them more energy efficient and accommodate more children, thus fostering equal opportunities for children. **Hamburg** spends €1 billion each year on early childhood education and care services.

Other cities, such as **Riga**, reported specific social inclusion measures rather than services. In 2019, among other measures, the city allocated over €300,000 to ensuring a guaranteed minimum income for families with children, provided childcare benefits amounting to €894,750, and ensured school supplies for all children in the amount of €58,700. This amounts to a total investment of over €1.25 million a year.

The share of the municipal budget that cities allocate to fight child poverty varies in size and how it is calculated. **Zagreb** allocates around 10% of its city budget to measures and services for children. **Stockholm** dedicates a little over 10% of its municipal budget to social welfare services and around 26% to schools. **Ljubljana** spends nearly a third of its city budget on childcare and school education, which is one of the highest shares among cities in Europe.



City pledges on principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights

Since 2019, Eurocities has been running a campaign to engage city leaders to commit to putting the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights into action by taking tangible local measures backed by specific budget allocations.

To date, mayors and deputy mayors from 18 cities⁷ in Europe have signed pledges to reinforce childcare and support for children in line with principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights. By doing so, cities have proven their strong commitment to continue investing in children and supporting those most in need.

For example, Bilbao has put in place a holistic City Plan for Children and Young People for 2018-2021 funded by a budget of €78 million.

Bristol has put in place a Children's Charter with public, private and non-profit organisations working together to improve children's access to education, ensure access to energy and food, and increase children's participation in child policies.

Ghent aims to invest more than €570 million in tackling poverty over the next four years through an integrated and holistic anti-poverty policy at municipal level, in which children and young people are the highest priority.

Hamburg is building 100 additional childcare centres in 2019 and 2020 and ten more family centres in addition to the 40 already in place. The city aims to increase the number of pedagogical staff by 2,750 come 2024.

Ljubljana aims to have by 2035 one kindergarten and one primary school in each city district to organise inclusive classes in mainstream education with extra support for children with special needs, shifting from the 'special school' approach.

Madrid has committed to increasing the number of childcare places by 10% and prioritising subsidised access for children from low-income families.

⁷ Bilbao, Bristol, Brno, Ghent, Hamburg, Istanbul, Leeds, Ljubljana, Lyon, Madrid, Malmö, Nicosia, Pau, Utrecht, Timisoara, Vantaa, Vienna, Warsaw. All city pledges and information about the Eurocities campaign are available at: <https://inclusivecities4all.eu/political-campaign/>.



6. Gaps and challenges

The fight against child poverty is at the heart of cities' priorities and actions. Yet when trying to combat this situation and support the families most in need, cities are confronted with a number of challenges that prevent them from improving the situation on the ground. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic not only exposed pre-existing inequalities (particularly regarding education, housing, and the digital divide) but also reinforced children's exposure to poverty. According to many analyses, children are becoming the pandemic's biggest victims in terms of social and economic impacts.



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Housing

Decent housing is a necessary condition for rising out of poverty and improving a child's life. Yet for many families, this fundamental human right is not met. **One in three cities** reported that the lack of affordable housing is one of the key obstacles to fighting child poverty. In most countries, families with children are not protected from eviction, even when no alternative solution is found to house them. To avoid homelessness, some families are pushed to accept dwellings that do not meet legal standards or are inadequate relative to their household size. This lack of decent housing can have a major impact on children's development, physical and mental health, and well-being. Moreover, many families pay an excessive share of their income for housing, leaving scant room for other basic needs like healthcare or food.

Another key issue related to the question of housing is gentrification and the subsequent concentration of disadvantaged groups in certain neighbourhoods (*de facto segregation*). These specific areas often have more difficult access to services owing to inadequate service availability (for example, places for free or affordable childcare services) relative to local needs. This territorial poverty and inequality can also materialise in other forms such as lack of access to green areas and outdoor activities such as parks and children's playgrounds.



© City of Tampere



Education and care

Another set of challenges that cities often face when addressing child poverty is related to education and care. Many services, such as childcare, are insufficiently available, yet they play a key role in providing equal opportunities from an early age.

For older children, inclusion measures in school are also essential and should be further reinforced. Education should guarantee equal opportunities for all, but the reality is often different. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted a pre-existing digital divide, reinforcing its repercussions for children from disadvantaged families to succeed in school. Consequently, the lockdown measures led to higher school absenteeism. During months of lockdown and remote learning, a large share of accompanying pupils was delegated to parents. Unfortunately, not all families have the same abilities and resources to accompany their children through home schooling and learning.

The pandemic has also had a strong impact on children's health, both physical and mental. Cities have noted an increase in demand for support during the pandemic, as well as an increase in loneliness among children and young people, especially among children at risk. These months of lockdown are having dire and probably long-lasting consequences for children's needs. Yet for many years the waiting period for care and specialised services had already been particularly long, in part due to a lack of professionals. While this affects all children in need of support, it can have additional consequences for disadvantaged families and children and young people with disabilities.



Adopting integrated approaches that address families' situations as a whole

Poverty is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon and child poverty is even more so. A major challenge in combating it therefore lies in **adopting integrated approaches** that address these different elements. As the cycle of inherited poverty shows, the situation of children is closely related to that of their parents, which therefore needs to be tackled in conjunction with the needs of the child. One of the most visible challenges in combating family poverty is the lack of sufficient income. Recent evolutions of the labour market, with high levels of unemployment, insufficient pay and increasing numbers of working poor and insecure jobs often go beyond the competences of cities. Here again, the COVID-19 crisis has led to a significant increase in the unemployment rate, thus putting more families in poverty. Additionally, many families face debt owing to the pandemic (during which they lost their income) and face additional difficulties and arrears. As a result, cities are often forced to come up with measures to deal with the consequences of the lack of income while also trying to improve their programmes related to prevention and early intervention. These are indeed essential when trying to avoid transmitting vulnerabilities to a new generation.

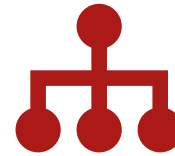


Lack of resources

Despite ample will to combat child poverty, cities are confronted with limited budgets and insufficient funding. This often leads to limited availability of services and sometimes affects their quality. This phenomenon is further reinforced by the increase in poverty and thus additional needs arising from the crisis. While this affects most cities, it also creates inequalities between cities based on available financial resources. Cities also worry that after the crisis, austerity measures might be imposed, thereby impacting families and further affecting cities' capacity to combat child poverty. Political support will play a key role in ensuring availability of all resources required. Besides monetary support, cities are also struggling to attract sufficient human resources, especially trained and qualified professionals in childcare and education and other care services. The low salaries impede the attractiveness of certain jobs, especially when combined with the high cost of living in cities.



© City of Ljubljana, archive kindergarten Kolezija



Governance

Governance can represent an important obstacle when trying to address child poverty. It takes several forms. First, the coordination of all levels of government involved in fighting child poverty (particularly the national and regional/local levels) can be difficult. This can be exacerbated by the need to coordinate a variety of stakeholders involved in the process.

Furthermore, the lack of interinstitutional cooperation between different services makes progress even more difficult, especially when certain services are under the responsibility of local authorities while others are under national authorities. This underlines the problem of competences. In some countries, cities lack the competences to address all interlinked issues which contribute to child poverty. This can put at risk the continuity of services, for example when youth services depend on a different level of government than child services. Additionally, when legislation is defined at national level, cities often lack the flexibility required to adapt services to local circumstances and specificities. Together with unnecessary administrative barriers, this sometimes means that the most vulnerable children are considered not eligible for receiving help or accessing the available support measures. Very specific legislation often prevents cities from experimenting with new approaches and therefore from innovating new policy initiatives. In other countries, local governments do have the competences delegated to them by the national government but lack the matching financing resources to fully carry out their responsibilities with regards to preventing and fighting child poverty.

7. Cities act to mitigate the COVID-19 impact on children

During the coronavirus pandemic and the closure of schools and childcare in 2020, cities responded quickly to the urgent needs of children and parents. Cities provided food aid, digital equipment and devices to help children follow classes online, and even income support and psychological counselling and play resources. Cities are learning from this experience to become more resilient and better prepared and are creating contingency plans for the functioning of kindergartens and schools in future scenarios.



Provision of digital devices

Many cities (26 of 35) recognised the need to reduce educational inequalities by making sure that children have access to digital devices and the internet.

Amsterdam provided 6,650 devices (laptops, tablets) and 800 Wi-Fi hotspots, which were distributed among schools. Students could borrow these devices as long as the schools were closed.

Ghent collected and donated laptops and smartphones to vulnerable children and young people. A project coordinator was assigned to make sure vulnerable children benefit from the various support initiatives at different levels. Ghent also opened new Wi-Fi networks. **Glasgow** provided 7,000 devices and connectivity packages to children and made funds available for organisations to purchase and distribute digital devices and carry out literacy work. **Poznan** worked with IT companies to provide equipment to children in institutional and foster care.



Food distribution

Another priority for cities was to provide food to children in need. 22 cities (of the 35 surveyed) put in place measures to deliver food to children in need.

For example, **Leeds** set up a large network for the distribution of food and sanitary products, with the help of many volunteers. **Oulo** managed to continue a free school lunch service, which has been guaranteed to all children in Finland by law since 1948; during the pandemic, the city offered meal packages that parents could pick up and reheat at home.

Espoo distributed snack bags at various places in the city at the beginning of the pandemic, then collected feedback from parents and children and improved the service, providing more nutritious meals that are easy to reheat, milk, vegetables and/or fruit, bread and butter for a week. These could be booked online and collected once a week. In **Ljubljana**, 550 meals were delivered to children's homes daily by public transport drivers whose services were on hold due to lockdown in spring; in autumn the number of provided meals has increased to 2,300 per day.



Leisure activities

Many cities had great success in offering online or alternative leisure time activities for children during the lockdown. For instance, **Madrid** proposed online leisure activities via its 'Conecta Juventud' platform, racking up 1.2 million connections. **Rotterdam** supported the release of an app ('Grow-It') with the Erasmus Medical Centre in order to let children and young people play a game designed to strengthen resilience and stress-coping strategies and monitor their mental health and situation at home.

Utrecht donated sports equipment and toys for children to use at home or outdoors. Other cities considerably reinforced their offer of leisure activities after the first lockdown ended or during the summer holidays (e.g. Amsterdam, Ghent, Madrid, Malmö, Milan, Rūbi).



Outreach and cooperation

Since many children had difficulty accessing public services, some cities (Espoo, Ghent, Glasgow, Leeds, Milan, Oulo, Tampere, Utrecht, Vienna) tried to reach out to vulnerable children, in cooperation with local church communities or NGOs. In **Espoo**, school welfare services, including school social workers and psychologists, were mobilised to reach the most vulnerable pupils. **Ghent** installed youth reception desks in different neighbourhoods and cooperated with NGOs that went door to door to distribute toys, ask about families' well-being and inform them about upcoming summer projects for children. Ghent also cooperated with Repair cafe, the Public Centre for Social Welfare, Ghent's Solidarity Fund, Ghent's IT agency Digipolis and the Ghent Youth Department to provide children with digital devices. **Oulo** worked closely with UNICEF Finland to establish a list of good practices in many areas (early education, student counselling, youth work, services for disabled children). **Utrecht** created a stakeholder network to provide support to children in need during the pandemic, which continued after the first lockdown.



Online counselling

Some cities created online and phone services to counsel children and their families and improve their mental and emotional health. **Leipzig** set up a phone hotline for parents. **Barcelona** published a guide for families, teachers and other professionals to detect discomfort in children, help children manage their emotions, and mitigate the negative mental effects of the pandemic. **Madrid** published 15 guides to help families cope with a range of issues including emotional support for children, family co-existence during confinement, family grief, and violence prevention. **Leeds** set up an online service for children to receive psychological counselling or simply to chat with someone. **Ljubljana's** kindergartens offered online counselling to families; city services did so for both parents and children by telephone or email. **Milan** works extensively to provide early childhood services (serving 33,000 children), having created 70 digital platforms for personal support, with suggestions tailored for each child by their educator or teacher.



Daycare facilities

Cities also made sure that children in need, especially those of workers in essential professions, could benefit from daycare facilities and study spaces. **Amsterdam** cooperated with schools to make daycare available for children who were in an unsafe family situation; for children who had difficulties studying at home, it was possible to go to school a certain number of hours per week. **Brno** provided daycare facilities in the local Waldorf primary and nursery school. Moreover, volunteers babysat children of essential workers, and Masaryk University students helped teach children at home. In **Utrecht**, in addition to emergency daycare, some schools provided spaces for children to do their homework.



Needs analysis

Some cities pursue research activities to analyse the main problems the COVID-19 pandemic created, and make people in need active participants in the development of future policies. **Tampere** conducted a survey of families to identify the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on children, and the results will inform the planning of the next city budget. **Madrid** also conducted a survey that revealed important data to implement a new measure called 'Families Card', which provides food and basic material assistance to families in need. **Ghent** reached out to vulnerable families and NGOs to detect bottlenecks. Both governmental and civil society social welfare organisations discuss together how to find solutions to these issues. A co-creation initiative was set up to involve young people in Ghent's recovery plans on the use of public spaces, sports and culture, education and youth work. In **Glasgow**, a survey of 31 local organisations examined the coordination challenges during lockdown, to consider how to improve neighbourhood interagency emergency structures.



8. Conclusions and recommendations

Every child deserves the opportunity to realise their full potential, regardless of their background or where they live. However, evidence from cities shows that the socio-economic situation of families and the neighbourhoods where they live are still strong predictors of a child's future opportunities. There is a need to increase policy action and social investments in children to close the gap in access to services and break the cycle of poverty faced by millions of children in Europe.

Cities play a key role in fighting child poverty and breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. As the level of government closest to people, local authorities are the first to see and respond to any new needs, which was very apparent during the COVID-19 crisis. Local authorities also offer tailored local services in proximity to children and their families, who as a result feel better supported because they get to know and trust local service providers.

Survey findings show that cities are committed to fighting child poverty but need more resources and financial support from the EU and national governments to tackle inequalities and promote equal opportunities for all children from a young age.

Therefore, there is a need to empower and support cities to set up integrated local strategies to reduce child poverty, with a focus on prevention and early intervention and a territorial, place-based approach that targets the most deprived areas. There is a need to shift the fragmented policy approach to a holistic, systemic approach that promotes equal opportunities for all children across policies and services, combined with targeted measures to address the specific challenges of the children most in need, including children in single-parent families, children of (undocumented) migrants or Roma families, children living in precarious housing or who are homeless, and children with disabilities or special needs.

To improve the situation of children living in poverty in cities, we recommend the following actions:

a. Promote a positive and participatory approach.

It is not enough to focus only on the basic needs of children, because this is not sufficient to bridge the gap between children in need and those not in need. All children deserve more than just having their basic needs met; they deserve a positive outlook that enables them to achieve their best potential. There is a need to ensure disadvantaged children also get access to culture, sports, and recreation, as well as to digital skills and financial and media literacy so they can develop into responsible citizens, fulfil their full potential in society, feel like they belong, and participate in their community, city and Europe. Policymakers at EU, national and local levels should involve children of all backgrounds in the decisions that directly impact them and ensure children's voices are heard in all policies that affect their lives. It is thus important to ensure children's voices represent children's diversity. Cities offer inspiring examples for organising accessible forms of participation and co-creation with children, such as introducing youth councils.

b. Adopt a holistic, integrated and transversal approach.

To break the vicious circle of the inheritance of poverty, it is not enough to focus on children in isolation from their parents; the family as a whole must be examined. Improving the situation of children depends on improving the situation of their family, whether by getting them out of debt, helping parents get a good job with fair pay, or heating or renovating their homes. There is a need to shift the approach from fragmented policy on child poverty to an integrated and holistic approach to promoting equal opportunities and long-term investment in children, including holistic support for their families. This goes beyond support for their material needs to include their relational-emotional needs, especially the need to have more time and space for family activities, which is crucial to children's well-being. Therefore, the principle of equal opportunities needs to be mainstreamed in all policy areas, from formal and non-formal education to housing, healthcare, welfare, employment, culture and public space. Cities offer innovative approaches to put this into practice, such as 'childproofing' policies to assess their potential impact on children and 'child-friendly' budgets. There is also a need to improve coordination between services (e.g. social, healthcare, education, childcare) via an integrated approach to service provision. As some services are under municipal competence and others under national competence, enhanced efforts are required to ensure coordination between these services. One example is to set up one-stop shops for easy access to all relevant support services in a given city district or local area.

c. Take on a place-based approach.

Protecting children from poverty involves offering support to them where they live and making services available as close to their home as possible. This is far from being the case for children in deprived urban areas or disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where children often lack childcare placement, are far from health services, and may even lack access to green parks or play areas. To address unequal access to basic services, it is crucial to make services available locally in the area where children live. This would involve considerable investment to increase the number of places in and quality of healthcare, childcare and education services in deprived areas. More services and activities for children in the area where they live means services are more available, easier to access, and more affordable (less money spent on in-city transport). This is in line with recent urban movements towards 'the 15-minute city': improving quality of life by ensuring people can reach all services they need on daily basis within 15 minutes by foot or bike.



d. Focus on prevention and early intervention.

It is better to detect the risk before it materialises into disadvantage. An early warning system based on risk markers could be embedded in all services working with children to enable them to alert social services, which in turn could reach out to children at risk, early on, with tailored support. A case management approach can be promoted, with one case manager coordinating with all relevant services an offer of tailored support for each child according to their individual needs, including psychological counselling. Such a preventative and proactive approach to identifying children in need is more cost-effective than mitigating the effects of child poverty, but it requires building capacity and resources for social work outreach. This approach calls for addressing the root causes of child poverty, which often relate to the child's family situation, particularly socio-economic background, parents' level of education, risk of debt owing to recent unemployment in the family, or eviction risk. There are inspiring examples from cities of innovative preventative approaches that offer valuable lessons.

e. Address the digital divide and support children in need of catching up with learning.

Evidence from cities shows that home schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of falling behind for children most in need. The skills of parents are not always sufficient to support children and engage in their learning process. Remote education cannot compensate for learning in the classroom, as the learning process is also influenced by the physical learning environment, including the study space a child has at home. As families in need often have smaller housing units, where spaces for home schooling, teleworking and family activities need to be shared, this may cause tension and increase the risk of family conflict and domestic violence. Moreover, even after schools reopened, many children in need did not return to school owing to their families' reluctance to send them into an environment where the virus could spread. As a result, many of them risk missing a school year and possibly dropping out of school. Therefore, education and social services need to join forces to support children in need of catching up with their education.

f. Improve (local) child poverty data collection, data sharing and monitoring.

Cities, member states and the EU need a common framework of indicators and a joint database to share data and coordinate support services to respond proactively to prevent child poverty and mitigate its effects. Evidence from cities shows that a great challenge of child poverty is the limited availability of local data, which is not comparable across cities owing to different definitions and indicators used. Aggregate figures at macro-level based on national averages are not sufficient to reveal the diverse child poverty situations within member states and even within cities. There is a need to improve child poverty monitoring by adding micro-level data at local level, and where possible, at district or neighbourhood level. There needs to be a systematic monitoring of children's needs on the local level; the closer this is done to where they live, the better the information will be for identifying children at risk. Local data can help detect any territorial inequalities in access to services, which, in turn, can help cities develop or improve local evidence-based policies for reducing child poverty. It is important to build cities' capacity to collect comparable data on child poverty based on common methodologies.



Policy recommendations for the EU Child Guarantee

All surveyed cities support the creation of an EU Child Guarantee to **help all children in need**. To achieve this goal, the role of cities needs to be recognised, supported and financed as such. We recommend the following:

1. Be inclusive of all children in need

The EU Child Guarantee should help all children in need living in Europe, regardless of their origin, background, citizenship or residence status, or where they live. All children should have their rights protected and no child should be left behind. However, national legislation in many EU countries allows cities to provide services only to residents, which has created a broad gap in ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all children, especially children without residence permits who fall through the cracks. The EU Child Guarantee framework should cover gaps in national legislations and ensure its provisions are applicable not just to residents or nationals of EU member states, but also to children who are refugees or asylum seekers and children who are citizens of one EU country but living in another EU country (intra-EU mobile citizens), such as children of Roma families, who are often at the highest risk of poverty and the most disadvantaged in accessing rights and services.

2. Ensure flexibility to adapt to local needs

Different cities have different groups of vulnerable children whose specific needs vary across cities within the same country. This requires locally tailored interventions to help the children in need in every city. Therefore, the Child Guarantee should allow the flexibility to adapt to local needs by enabling the definition of target groups of 'children in need' to be made on the local level and allowing cities to use Guarantee resources in a flexible way to support the children who need it most, such as those in deprived areas.

3. Set up local Child Guarantee schemes

To address the specific urban challenges of child poverty and tackle the specific needs of children at local level, the Child Guarantee should be localised. Coordinated by city authorities, the local schemes would be based on an integrated strategy linking social, education, health, housing, employment and family services. Local schemes would combine measures to improve availability, accessibility and affordability of local services, with targeted policies to enhance social inclusion and equal opportunities for disadvantaged children and support for parents to access work, get out of debt and improve the family's chances of breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality. Local schemes could be implemented through local partnerships between municipal-led services and the third sector, local communities, parents and children, schools, education providers, social/welfare service providers, healthcare providers, charities, NGOs and the private sector (promote business champions to invest in this cause). Local partnerships could ensure a participatory approach to the local Child Guarantee.

4. Boost EU and national support for local-level social investment

It is vital to strengthen local social infrastructure (e.g. childcare and education facilities, social housing, play infrastructure, etc.) in order to provide effective and universal inclusive services for all children. With sufficient financial support, cities could make it possible to offer free or subsidised education and childcare to children in need, and ensure all children have a warm and decent home and adequate nutrition through free school meals. To make it possible, the EU should ensure adequate, direct or easily accessible EU funding (e.g. ESF+) for the local level, to give all cities sufficient resources for fighting child poverty. EU funding should allow room for social innovation at local level in order to pilot new models to reduce child poverty and test new ways to organise services to better cater for the needs of vulnerable children.

5. Involve cities as key partners in developing and delivering the Child Guarantee

In addition to national government expertise, it is important to have expertise from city governments, which view the problem of child poverty differently. Cities in different countries in Europe encounter similar problems owing to their scale. Large cities have extensive expertise and knowledge concerning which (integrated) policies were successful and which were not. The EU Child Guarantee could help cities evaluate their policies on poverty reduction and disseminate successful good practices. These insights can result in valuable lessons for the local and national schemes of Child Guarantee. Therefore, it is important to involve cities as key partners in shaping the EU Child Guarantee as well as in defining the national strategies and action plans. To make this possible, it is vital to ensure multilevel governance of the EU Child Guarantee, including joint responsibility and coordinated local, national and EU strategies.

Annex

Inspiring practices from cities on child poverty



Amsterdam

The Netherlands

Key City Stats

City Population:

872 380

Children in Poverty:

24 463

Key Project Stats

Funding:

€8-9 million funded by municipal government, combined with discounts provided by partner organisations.

Age Group:

0-17

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/AmsterdamCYP>

Activity pass for low income families

Amsterdam has created a pass for low income families and children that allows them to take part in cultural and sporting activities, such as visiting a museum or going swimming, for free or at a reduced rate.

Thirty years ago, Amsterdam introduced the 'Stadspas' as a participation instrument for elderly and households with low income. In recent years, a large part of the Stadspas activities has been aimed at families and children.

Led by the City Council, with support from other local organisations, Stadspas aims to support social mobility by encouraging children to develop their interest and skills at a young age.

The pass has been very successful with 72% of target households owning a pass in recent years.

When looking at households with children, the reach has been 87% for single-parent families with young children and 77% for families with two adults with young children.

City Child Poverty Strategy

In addition to several initiatives targeted at children and families on low income, Amsterdam has developed a policy that cuts across policy areas to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.





Barcelona

Spain

Key City Stats

City Population:

1 666 530

Children in Poverty:

34.4 %

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by municipal government. Approx. €13 million per year from 2015-2019.

Age Group:

0-16

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/BarcelonaCYP>

Low income fund

To support low income families, Barcelona has created a grant fund for children aged 0-16. The grant of €100/month per child is aimed at covering basic subsistence needs.

Families must apply for the funding via a dedicated call for applications and can only access the funding for a maximum of nine consecutive months.

Interestingly, the initiative identifies the child as the subject who has the right to receive the support, with the adult responsible for the management of the money.

Evaluation of the fund has demonstrated that the initiative has been effective in reducing the severity of child deprivation and improving the quality of life for children and their families.

Another positive outcome of the initiative is that the additional financial security allows adults to dedicate more time to childcare, training and looking for work. Lessons learned from the initiative have shown that stopping the fund after nine months can have a negative impact with recipients sometimes feeling abandoned by the local government.





Braga

Portugal

Key City Stats

City Population:

200 000

Children in Poverty:

NA

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by municipal government.

Age Group:

3-18

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/BragaCYP>

Economic support for school children

Braga has introduced a targeted programme of support for school children living in poverty, to ensure that additional charges associated with attending school e.g transport, books and meals do not act as a barrier to attendance.

This includes a range of subsidised activities such as free or reduced cost transport to school and free school meals, which the city government has invested over €2 million in supporting. Additional resources are also dedicated to supporting pupils to buy textbooks.

One interesting element of the programme is the creation of participatory school budgets. This aims to involve school students in the decisions that affect them while attending school. Through the participatory school budget, children are able to identify, develop and vote on projects they consider important to their development.

City Child Poverty Strategy

A key focus of Braga's strategic approach is on early detection of risk cases, and subsequent detection, monitoring and / or follow-up by the Child Protection Network (CPCJ). The intervention of this network focuses on global access to education and the creation of educational accompaniment programmes that provide these children with recreational and cultural activities, plus other support such as transportation services, meals etc.





Brussels Capital Region

Belgium

Key City Stats

City Population:

1 200 000

Children in Poverty:

Around 40%

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by the Commission Communautaire Française (public administration for French speaking inhabitants in Brussels)

Age Group:

0-3

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/BrusselsCYP>

Coaching programme for childcare services

Badje, an NGO based in Brussels, has created a project that aims to increase the number of deprived families accessing early childcare services in the city.

Children from low income backgrounds are often underrepresented at childcare providers for a number of reasons, including lack of available places, lack of knowledge about the services provided and low income families focusing on other priorities around 'survival'. This can be very detrimental for children, as it has been proven that quality care during early childhood plays a crucial role in a child's development.

Badje has tried to overcome this problem by providing a two-year-long coaching service to childcare providers to encourage them to adapt their offer and actively look to create places for children from low-income families.

One key lesson learned has been the importance of providing the coaching over a sustained period of time. This has allowed time to create strong partnerships and long-lasting change.

City Child Poverty Strategy

Brussels Capital Region has a strategic approach with focus on ensuring access to childcare, affordable housing, and mobility. With the help of the third sector, the city government aims to develop a specific plan targeting single parent families, with a focus on women (they represent 86% of single parent families). Brussels Capital Region is also responsible for the children's benefits policy and ensures a reinforced support to families in poverty or with low revenues.



Espoo

Finland

Key City Stats

City Population:

292 000

Children in Poverty:

9.5%

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by municipal government.

Age Group:

Pregnant mothers and families with children aged 0–6

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/EspooCYP>

Support service for multilingual mothers and newborns

Espoo has created an initiative, known as the MONIKU model, which offers multilingual families extra support with language development.

The MONIKU model was developed as a new service model within the city's existing maternity and child health clinic services, to better answer to the needs of multilingual families.

The aim of the project is to offer mothers, who often speak little or no Finnish, additional support with their child's language development, which, due to time restrictions of existing clinical appointments, is not an area that is currently supported.

Nurses with expertise in language development and integration issues offer tools and models to support the family and their interaction with their newly-born child. The service is free of charge and translators are provided if required to facilitate the sessions. During the first three years, the results have been positive

with more than half of surveyed respondents stating they are less afraid of their own mother tongue's negative impacts on the child's ability to learn Finnish. Another important outcome has been that as the parents' understanding and knowledge of language development and their own role in supporting this increases, they can better support their child during years to come.

City Child Poverty Strategy

Espoo's goal is to provide every child and young person with equal rights, opportunities and resources to allow them to be involved in society. The risks associated with poverty are addressed by measures relating to education, employment and homelessness, among other things. Parents are supported by means such as income support, targeted services and cooperation between school and home.



Frankfurt

Germany

Key City Stats

City Population:

758 574

Children in Poverty:

17.7%

Key Project Stats

Funding:

In 2019, the Free Kindergarten cost €180 million, with €164 million funded by the municipal government, and the remaining €16 million by the region.

Age Group:

3-6

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/FrankfurtCYP>

Free childcare places for children aged 3 - 6 years

In 2018, the German state of Hesse ruled that daycare for children aged 3-6 of up to six hours a day would be funded by the state. Yet families living in Frankfurt face a specific challenge: Frankfurt is one of the most expensive cities in Germany. Single-income-households are the exception, not the rule. Providing families with full-time low or no cost daycare is therefore a prerequisite to a diverse and inclusive community. Frankfurt therefore decided to cover the remaining costs for full-time daycare.

As of 2020, there are 25,000 daycare places for children aged 3-6 in about 800 daycare centres. 97% of all children of that age group are enrolled in one of those centres. The city continues to work on creating even more, high-quality daycare places.

Additionally, daycare for children aged 0-3 from deprived families is also subsidised by the city.





Ghent

Belgium

Key City Stats

City Population:

260 000

Children in Poverty:

18.9%

Key Project Stats

Funding:

€280 000 per year funded by municipal government.

Age Group:

2.5 - 18

Welfare and education services working hand-in-hand

Ghent has created an initiative- Children First - that aims to bridge the gap between education services and welfare services by allowing children and families to access social support while at school. This is particularly important for hard-to-reach families and children who do not usually engage with social services due to a lack of knowledge, language barriers or negative previous experiences etc. Children First sees social workers present in schools (available for appointments or at fixed times) to discuss with a child and/or their family about their living situation. Results of the discussions can lead to access and signposting to other services that the family or child wasn't previously aware of. The results have been very positive with many new families signing up to a variety of social care services (free school lunches, debt support, medical support etc.). Consequently, the initial pilot project now receives funding as a regular municipal service and became part of a broader development to lower thresholds within the welfare reception desks. The social workers can also rely on the support of a psychologist. They offer support to families with urgent needs and support the schools where needed.

But most importantly, they offer support to the social workers who are confronted with complex and sometimes upsetting cases.

City Child Poverty Strategy

The Ghent approach to reducing child poverty is rooted in some general principles regarding services to residents: the city always takes the broad (and complex) context into account and may act as guide, mediator, facilitator and/or actor of social change in the neighbourhood. These general principles are supplemented with the pillars of the Convention of the Rights of the Child to extend the city's focus from providing all necessary services to foster children's development up to and including proactively protecting children (and their access to rights) and actively promoting children's participation, fully-fledged citizens of the city.



Glasgow

United Kingdom

Key City Stats

City Population:

630 000

Children in Poverty:

34% (37 000)

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Majority funded by municipal government, with additional support from other partners.

Age Group:

11-18

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/GlasgowCYP>

Financial Inclusion Officer in Schools

Glasgow City Council offers advice provision through a number of advice hubs across the city which residents can access when they are experiencing financial difficulties or need support accessing entitlements. These services, however, have seen relatively low take-up due to long waiting times, office hours and increased caring responsibilities which often go hand in hand with living on a low income.

To combat this, Glasgow has worked with schools across the city to embed financial support within an educational setting in the form of Financial Inclusion Officer.

Following an initial promotion of the additional services available through a leaflet shared across schools, parents and pupils were able to book appointments with a dedicated advisor for a financial health check to ensure that families were in receipt of their full benefit entitlement.

A key lesson learned from the initiative was how schools engaged with families about the offer of support, with a text message sent to parents proving more effective response than an information stand at parents evening.

City Child Poverty Strategy

Glasgow's approach consists of local authorities and health boards working jointly with a priority focus on single parents, families with a disability, young parents, large families and BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) families. There is a broad spectrum of work taking place from automation of educational and statutory entitlements, and employability programmes for parents, to financial inclusion embedded in acute health and educational settings, as well as work to understand the underlying or hidden costs of pregnancy and having younger children of nursery age.



Leeds

United Kingdom

Key City Stats

City Population:

780 000

Children in Poverty:

23 % (35 000)

Key Project Stats

Funding:

£30,000 per year funded by municipal government & private sector donations.

Age Group:

7+

More Information:

<http://bit.ly/LeedsCYP>

Tackling period poverty

Period poverty, which refers to a lack of access to sanitary products due to financial constraints, has raised a lot of attention in the UK in recent years. Alongside the problems that individuals who can't afford sanitary protection face, there are also issues of stigma and embarrassment around discussing menstruation.

Leeds City Council has been working with young people and other organisations to develop a scheme that provides period products in a non-stigmatising, sustainable way.

The scheme provides period products, which are in packaging designed by a young person, for free in schools and community hubs. The City Council is also working in partnership with a company to develop an app to support the distribution of period products. Since 2019, the initiative has distributed over 56,000 packs of products.

City Child Poverty Strategy

Thriving, the name of the child poverty strategy for Leeds, is centred on creating inclusive, equal partnerships, made up of children and young people, council directorates, schools, education provisions, academics, third sector, private sector, public sectors, and community representatives. These partnerships use their knowledge and expertise to investigate the impact of poverty on a specific area of children's lives, and then work together to create projects that mitigate this impact.





Ljubljana

Slovenia

Key City Stats

City Population:

292 988

Children in Poverty:

NA

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by municipal government.

Age Group:

3-18

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/LjubljanaCYP>

Inclusive childcare and preschool education

To ensure that preschool education is affordable and accessible for all children in Ljubljana, the city is subsidising the cost of programmes in kindergartens. The cost of programme depends on a family's income bracket and is free for the families with the lowest incomes.

Significant subsidies from public funds, along with large-scale investments in infrastructure have resulted in a high level of inclusion of children in preschool education. In 2019, 95.5% of all children were included in high quality kindergarten programmes, which was well above the national average of 81.2%.

The high participation rates underlines that Ljubljana offers childcare and support to all children, regardless of their social and ethnic background or their special needs.

The city also offers support to families during the school holidays. Each year it selects high quality providers of a nine-hour daily programme of activities (sports, leisure, creative etc.), to offer free or subsidised childcare during summer holidays. For families living in poverty all programmes are free.





Madrid

Spain

Key City Stats

City Population:

3 334 730

Children in Poverty:

33.1%

Key Project Stats

Funding:

€35.2 million from the municipal budget.

Age Group:

0-3

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/MadridCYP>

Nursery schools network

Following a decision to break away from the regionally funded nurseries, Madrid City Council decided to create its own network of municipal nurseries, with a strong emphasis on the quality of services provided by the network.

To date, the network has expanded to 70 Municipal Nurseries which offer free registration to all children and free attendance to children from poorer families. To support the development of children, a number of initiatives focusing on quality, have been introduced across the network. This has included training courses to improve the skills and qualifications of staff, and an increased focus on promoting healthy and sustainable diets, with nursery canteens offering healthy meals made from Fairtrade and organic food. A healthy eating guide for parents has also been produced, providing key information on how to provide healthy and safe food for children aged 0-3 years old.

In addition to the municipal nurseries, the city government has also made available €3 million annually in grants to cover the costs of disadvantaged families who choose to send their children to private nurseries.

City Child Poverty Strategy

Madrid's strategy follows six strategic lines of action that cover all areas of life for children and their families:

1. Participation of children and adolescents;
2. Strengthening of care and intervention program aimed at childhood and adolescence;
3. Family, Education and Society;
4. Healthy lifestyles, Health, Leisure, Culture and Sport;
5. Healthy urban environment;
6. Continuous evaluation: looking for the quality of interventions and information.



Malmo

Sweden

Key City Stats

City Population:

350 000

Children in Poverty:

NA

Key Project Stats

Funding:

€3.09 million with €1.45 million financed through ESF

Age Group:

The whole family

More Information:

Please contact magnus.sjoberg@malmo.se

Programme of welfare support for the ‘whole family’

Malmo has introduced a project that aims to support children, young people and adults into employment or education, helping to improve independence and integration into society.

The project, known as Hela Familjen 2.0 (The Whole Family), is targeted at adults with children that have been receiving income support for 24 months and have therefore been removed from the labour market for a sustained period of time. To support these families, the City Council has taken a holistic approach by providing a social worker to support a whole family over a period of time through regular meetings.

By working intensively with a family as a whole, the social worker is able to identify key needs and support the family to overcome these by matching them with appropriate services.

This approach ensures that the adults can find sustainable employment and children can remain in education longer, and in turn, support their route to the labour market.

The project has so far reached over 800 adults and had positive effect with over 180 becoming self-sufficient through their engagement in the project, some of which had been receiving income support for over 10 years.





Milan

Italy

Key City Stats

City Population:

1 404 431

Children in Poverty:

10% (21 000)

Key Project Stats

Funding:

€680 000 funded by a combination of municipal & national budget over two years.

Age Group:

0-6

Fighting educational poverty with community-led approach

Primi Passi (First Steps) is a project created to fight the educational poverty i.e lack of educational, cultural resources, services and opportunities for minors and families. The main target audience of the project is families with young children who experience high levels of hardship, vulnerability and educational poverty. The project has been specifically targeted to a deprived and multicultural area of Milan (Via Padova) and aims to involve education stakeholders and communities in the area to create a governance system that can respond in a more adequate way to the needs of the people living there.

In order to reach this goal, the project has developed the following activities:

- A multi-professional training for all professionals that are in contact with children (0-6 years old), in order to create a common language, common set of tools and an efficient network.
- In schools - pedagogical supervision in order to create spaces and materials which are more inclusive.
- Workshops for families in order to reinforce the participation of families and reinforce the educational alliance between educators and parents.
- Psychomotor Workshops and Pet Therapy in order to sustain vulnerable children.
- Creation of groups for mothers from migratory backgrounds in order to break isolation and create a space for sharing experiences. The group is supported by intercultural mediators.
- Special ECEC services open days for vulnerable families so they can better understand ECEC services.

These activities helped to develop a public-private educational model, based on local needs which has helped to create a strong local educational community. The project lasted two years and supported 1000 families with children, with further plans to replicate the model to other areas of the city.



Oulu

Finland

Key City Stats

City Population:

207 283

Children in Poverty:

13.7% (6 022)

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by a combination of municipal budget and national funding.

Age Group:

0-17

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/OuluCYP>

A city budget that responds to the needs of children

To support the focus and development of city services aimed at children, Oulu is developing a city budget that is responsive to the needs of children.

Making a city budget child responsive is an initiative that helps a city ensure that its budget is based on evidence and the contextual understanding of children's actual needs. The model also demonstrates that spending on preventative services can be more cost-effective than spending on higher-cost specialised services.

The model, introduced in Oulu, works by classifying city services into 'a traffic-light' model to make the city budget child responsive.

For example:

- Red services: continuous 24 hour support e.g. in institutional care, hospital care at the main hospital premises.
- Green services - early preventative and universal services, e.g. early and basic education and 'Neuvola' (maternity clinics).
- Yellow services: - Child, family needs temporary support or care e.g. family social work, special needs education.





Rotterdam

The Netherlands

Key City Stats

City Population:

650 597

Children in Poverty:

18.4%

Key Project Stats

Funding:

NA

Age Group:

Families with children under the age of 18

Family Support

Rotterdam has created an approach with family support to help families with children that live in poverty.

It's officially called 'integrated, intensive approach for family with children in poverty' which explains what the initiative is, and who it is meant to support. It is a pilot in three districts that have the worst poverty rates in the city. 500 families who hadn't been receiving services are being supported with dealing with financial problems, stress reduction and interventions for children in order for families to get their lives back on track.

Family support is a joint approach of social workers and, city staff in Rotterdam, in a project that is directly under the vice-mayor's portfolio. The ambition is to help families with children before their problems have become too big to handle.

The aim is to help parents to enlarge their social network as this is considered an important protective factor, and reduce stress and enhance their financial skills.

For their children, the aim is to increase their social and emotional competences in order to buffer the risks of child poverty and exclusion. With this approach, Rotterdam hopes to tackle the common reality of poverty that is transferred from one generation to the next.





Rubi

Spain

Key City Stats

City Population:

77 464

Children in Poverty:

15%

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Approximately €60 000 funded by municipal government.

Age Group:

0-6

Sharing parental experiences

The City Council in Rubi created a parenting group to support vulnerable families to improve their parenting skills.

The group is aimed at mothers, fathers or primary caregivers of children between the ages of 0 and 6 with the main objective of providing a space to allow families to share experiences with other families and professionals. During the sessions, which are directed by a professional social worker, the group explores concerns and doubts they may be having linked to parenthood, working together to find solutions to some of the challenges they are facing. Each family that takes part in the parenting group benefits from six 90 minute sessions.

Short term results have seen participants reporting improved self-esteem and improved confidence when facing challenges linked to parenthood.

Another in-direct result of the project has been a change in perception towards the City Council's social services. Professionals have also recognised the need for the increased diversification of work with families.

City Child Poverty Strategy

Rubi has in place a child poverty strategy with the following objectives:

- To promote in the social, educational and family sphere, a safe and stable environment capable of satisfying the basic needs of children.
- To generate support structures for families to ensure the well-being of children and adolescents.
- To promote a model of work organised in a network based on cooperation in the design of public policies for children.
- To promote the status and the right of citizenship of children and adolescents.
- To guarantee the access of children and adolescents to cultural resources and knowledge.



Stockholm

Sweden

Key City Stats

City Population:

974 000

Children in Poverty:

7.8%

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by municipal government.

Age Group:

0-18

Supporting social workers with Children's Right Manual

To support children who live in families that receive income support, Stockholm has developed a Children's Rights Manual to educate social workers who work with these families.

Using several key principles from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the manual encourages social workers to focus their attention on the children living in families with income support.

For example, the manual includes a chapter on the child's right to participation and information which includes descriptions of the child's right to receive relevant information from the social services and the child's right to have the opportunity to express his or her opinions. By focusing on the rights of the child, social services have an opportunity to reduce risk factors and create better conditions for children, supporting their future development.

Results of the initiative are being reflected in children becoming more visible in the documentation and in the conversations with adults who apply for income support.





Tampere

Finland

Key City Stats

City Population:

242 000

Children in Poverty:

14.7%

Key Project Stats

Funding:

€250,000 from the municipal budget.

Age Group:

Several pilots: 12-13, 5-11, and families with small children

Youthpass app to encourage the take up of hobbies

Research in Tampere and in Finland has indicated that as children grow up they participate less in hobbies, which is particularly apparent when comparing children at secondary school with those at primary school.

One of the reasons for this is the cost attached to hobbies, which can in turn lead to inequalities among children and families. To overcome this, Tampere has been trialing several pilot projects, which provide each child with a financial contribution (€250) during the autumn and the spring terms. This financial contribution can be used to cover the costs of participating in various different sports and leisure activities.

To enable children to easily access and use the money, Tampere has created a dedicated 'YouthPass' app which is compatible at different leisure venues across the city.

City Child Poverty Strategy

Tampere's approach is focused on children and families, supporting hobbies and activities which are free of charge, ensuring schools are free of charge and providing counselling services.





Utrecht

The Netherlands

Key City Stats

City Population:

357 719

Children in Poverty:

8 400

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by a combination of municipal budget and national funding.

Age Group:

0-18

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/UtrechtCYP>

Free City pass for children living in poverty

Like several Dutch cities, Utrecht has introduced a children's city pass, known as the U-Pass, that allows children from low income families to take part in social activities, such as entry at funparks and sport centres, at reduced rates or for free.

The pass provides children with their own budget of approximately €385 that they can use not only to access various recreational activities but also to buy equipment for school (books, agendas etc), as well as a bike and laptop device.

The results from the initiative have been very positive with more children from low income families participating in sports and cultural events. One key lesson learned has been the importance of giving flexibility on what the children and families can use the money on the pass to access or buy, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.

City Child Poverty Strategy

Utrecht's strategy aims at making sure everybody can participate, focusing on a stable home situation through organising good financial help across the municipality, as well as educating children on the importance of budgeting to support a reduction in intergenerational poverty.





Vienna

Austria

Key City Stats

City Population:

1 897 491

Children in Poverty:

31% (115 000)

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by municipal government.

Age Group:

0-19

More Information:

<http://bit.ly/CYPVienna>

Children's participation in shaping the municipal strategy for children

Vienna organised a city-wide participation process with children and young people to develop the city's first ever Children and Youth Strategy.

The city consulted over 22,000 children and young people who participated in over 1,300 workshops held by educators, youth workers, teachers, social workers and volunteers with their groups/classes. Children were asked what works well in Vienna and what could be improved.

The inputs were analysed by a social science institute. Nine topics were identified as most relevant ranging from environment to mobility, safety, health and well-being. A children and youth advisory board was then invited to discuss and prioritise the ideas for new policies, which were then translated into 193 measures cutting across all departments of the city administration, to form the common vision of making Vienna a child-friendly city.

The city departments are committed to implementing the 193 measures by 2025. On top of this, the city will allocate a participatory children's and youth budget of €1 million per year and set up a children's and youth parliament to monitor progress.





Vilnius

Lithuania

Key City Stats

City Population:

562 000

Children in Poverty:

NA

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by European Social Fund and municipal government.

Age Group:

0-18

More Information:

<https://bit.ly/VilniusCYP>

Integrated family services

The main aim of this project was to create a network of partners providing professional integrated services, which could be accessed by families who face a range of challenges and difficulties in their daily lives.

Examples of some the services provided by the project include: positive parenting training, psychosocial assistance, family skills development and socio-cultural services, mediation services, and childcare services. One of the key goals of the project was to ensure the newly created services are easily accessible, which is why the project created four 'Community Family Houses' across the city.

Here, staff help identify the problems and needs of the family, before referring them to the relevant service provider.





Warsaw

Poland

Key City Stats

City Population:

1 790 658

Children in Poverty:

NA

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by the municipal government but delivered by the third sector. One programme of activity costs approx. €1.8 million.

Age Group:

0-26

Sharing parental experiences

Working with various NGO's, who have been selected through a tendering process, the City of Warsaw has created a Local Support System of interdisciplinary services for low-income families requiring support. The Local Support System uses resources that are already available in the district or wider city to provide a coordinated offer of support services.

Although many of the services may be carried out by the third sector, Warsaw ensures that its premises are available to allow for a physical space for these services to be delivered in.

The activities and support services delivered by the Local Support System are divided into three clear age groups: children aged 0-6 and their families, children aged 6-18 and their families, and actions targeted at youth and young adults aged 16-26.

City Child Poverty Strategy

Warsaw's strategic objectives are focused on limiting the exclusion of children and adolescents by guaranteeing families access to social services, creating a chance for young people to enter the labour market and supporting families by creating a system of educational, social and professional activities enabling them to acquire appropriate competences.





Zagreb

Croatia

Key City Stats

City Population:

790 017

Children in Poverty:

17.1% at risk of poverty

Key Project Stats

Funding:

Funded by municipal government.

Age Group:

15-26

Scholarships provide equal opportunities for all

Since 1992, Zagreb has invested heavily in city scholarships to allow all residents to access further education. For the city government this represents an important social investment in the future of each individual, but also for the wider city and society.

Every year, the city government awards a total of eight different types scholarships to pupils, undergraduates and postgraduate students including for example:

- for pupils and students belonging to the Roma ethnic minority
- for students studying to become nurses / general care technicians
- for pupils and students from poorer backgrounds, including funding for postgraduate university (doctoral) students and postgraduate specialist studies students
- for pupils and students with disabilities.

In 2019/2020, the city awarded a total of 847 different scholarships amounting to €4,080,000.

Scholarships are awarded via public tenders announced and published by the Mayor of Zagreb every year and are paid to recipients monthly. The scholarships are one of the most important measures of the social protection strategy of the city, which help to provide equal opportunities and bridge the gap in access to education.



