

Report on child poverty recommends the development of multidimensional child well-being



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The 252 pages report [“Child Poverty and Well-being in the EU, current status and way forward”](#) from the Task-Force on child poverty indicator has finally been published on the website of the European Commission.

The report is part of the implementation process of the European strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion of children in the EU. This issue being a common concern to all Member States, rapid and significant reduction of child poverty has proved to be a political priority of the EU at the beginning of the new century. In their 2006-2008 National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NRSSPSIs), the vast majority of the Member States prioritised the need to develop a strategic, integrated and long-term approach for preventing and alleviating poverty and social exclusion among children. For better monitoring of the different policies, a special task force was established by the Social Protection Committee (SPC), an advisory body of national ministries and the European Commission, supporting the implementation of the European strategy. The SPC has reserved a slot for an indicator on “child well-being” in the streamlined list of commonly agreed indicators for social inclusion that it adopted in June 2006. The task force followed up this process throughout the year 2007 and recently presented its report. Although the work hasn't yet resulted in a proposal of a concrete EU child well-being indicator, the report provides policy analysis at EU and Member States level.

The report consists of three parts: a review of child poverty and social exclusion in the EU, an overview about policy monitoring and assessment of child poverty and well-being in the EU and its Member States and conclusions on recommendations for SPC aiming at improving monitoring and assessment of child poverty and well-being at the EU and national level.

In its mandate, the task force agreed on seven dimensions of well-being and identified good examples of indicators within each of these dimensions: economic security and material situation; housing; local environment; health; education; social relationships and family environment, and exposure to risk and risk behaviour. The situation of vulnerable children (children in orphanages, disabled children, migrant children, children from minorities, children growing up in deprived areas, etc.) is being addressed as a “transversal” category. Based on questionnaires to all 28 Member States, the experts have published a summary of the most important data sources used by countries for monitoring their policies in the field of child poverty and child well-being. Furthermore, the report provides a description of the main types of indicators used in the policy monitoring systems and more detailed insight into monitoring arrangements in eight selected Member States, following different concepts (Denmark, Ireland, Finland, UK, Portugal, Italy, Romania and Germany).

The table on page 71 gives an overview on the main items covered by existing administrative data sources:

- recipients of child-related social allowances (BE, DK, DE, EE, ES, FR, IE, IT, LV, LT, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK, FI, SE);
- health status of children (BE, DK, IT, HU, MT, FI, SK, SE);
- income, taxes and transfers, poverty (DK, DE, IT, LT, HU, AT, PT, FI, SE);
- housing (DK, IT);
- childcare facilities (BE, DK, ES, IT, LT, LU, MT, AT, RO, SK, FI, SE);

- employment (DK, DE, FR, SE);
- education (BE, DK, FR, IE, IT, LV, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SE);
- population (DK, IT, MT, AT, RO, SE);
- justice (DK, IT, AT, LV, MT, PT, SK);
- after-school care, leisure, sport (DK, IT, AT, SK, SE, UK).

Besides, the report lists existing specific data sources, surveys on children (mostly longitudinal surveys implemented at national level) and presents a couple of “very innovative survey methods”, which are based on direct interviews with children.

In the concluding chapter, the task force experts express their opinions on future policy shaping and monitoring of child poverty and well-being in a set of 15 recommendations. Recommendation 1 suggests that national overall quantified objectives for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion need to be based on a diagnosis of the causes of poverty and social exclusion in each country. It also concludes that they have to be supplemented by specific objectives relating to the key factors identified by the diagnosis (e.g. jobless households, in-work poverty, social benefits, etc.).

In order to improve the measurement of child well-being, the task force proposes to:

- reflect on how the existing EU indicators can be complemented by derived indicators and statistics that better reflect the situation of households with children (e.g., labour market participation of parents and amended version of the “work intensity” variable for analysing poverty risk);
- take account of the child dimension when developing indicators of material deprivation and housing;
- develop one or several child well-being indicators to cover the important dimensions of child well-being that are still missing or not satisfactorily covered within the EU framework (health, exposure to risk and risk behaviour, education, social participation and family environment, local environment);
- draw up suggestions on how to best monitor the living conditions of children in vulnerable situations (e.g., children in institutions, children in foster care, children with chronic health problems or disabilities, abused children, street children, children from a migrant or minority background, etc.).

Those recommendations are, among other elements, addressed to Member States’ authorities that are setting up the national strategic plans for combating poverty and social exclusion in the period 2008 to 2011. The further development of child well-being indicators will be subject to further debate at EU level.

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