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# UN & CoE

January

February

March

3 March – Council of Europe Lanzarote Committee adopts the Special Report on Protecting Children affected by the Refugee Crisis from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

8 March – UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issues concluding observations on the periodic report of Estonia

April

18 April – Croatia ratifies Third Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on a communications procedure

May

12 May – In *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Ireland* (110/2014), the European Committee of Social Rights holds that Irish law, policy and practices on social housing do not comply with European housing, social protection and anti-discrimination standards, violating Article 16 of the Revised European Social Charter (right of the family to social, legal and economic protection)

19 May – Council of Europe adopts Action Plan on protecting refugee and migrant children (2017-2019)

June

July

13 July – UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issues its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Romania

August

September

11 September – Cyprus ratifies Third Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure

October

3 October – In *D.M.D. v. Romania* (No. 23022/13), a case concerning domestic abuse proceedings against a father, the ECtHR finds a violation of the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment (Article 3 of the ECHR) because of the lengthy investigation, which lasted over eight years and was marred by other serious shortcomings; and a violation of the right to a fair trial (Article 6 § 1 of the ECHR) because the courts failed to examine the merits of the children's complaint about the failure to award him compensation, as guaranteed by the domestic law

13 October – UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issues concluding observations on the periodic report of Cyprus

26 October – UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issues concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Denmark

November

17 November – Adoption of Joint General Comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration

17 November – Adoption of Joint General Comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return

December

# EU

## January

## February

## March

7 March – European Commission issues revised EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (6846/17)

31 March – European Parliament (EP) and Council of the EU adopt Directive (EU) 2017/541 on combating terrorism

## April

12 April – European Commission sets out actions to reinforce the protection of all migrant children in the Communication on 'The protection of children in migration' (COM(2017) 211 final)

## May

10 May – In *C. Chavez-Vilchez and Others v. Raad van bestuur van de Sociale verzekeringsbank and Others* (C-133/15), the CJEU holds that a non-EU citizen, as the parent of an under-aged child who is a citizen of an EU country, may rely on a derived right of residence, if their child's rights as a EU citizen could be violated if forced to leave the EU

## June

8 June – Council of the EU adopts Conclusions on the protection of children in migration

## July

27 July – European Commission sets up the High-level Commission Expert Group on radicalisation

## August

## September

28 September – European Commission adopts Communication on Tackling Illegal Content Online - Towards an enhanced responsibility of online platforms

## October

## November

7-8 November – 11th European Forum on the rights of the child, devoted to children deprived of their liberty and alternatives to detention

17 November – European Pillar of Social Rights is proclaimed by the EP, the Council and the Commission

## December

1 December – First joint meeting of the informal expert group on children in migration and the rights of the child

6 December – European Economic and Social Committee adopts an opinion on cooperation with civil society to prevent the radicalisation of young people



# 8

## Rights of the child



*Child poverty rates in the EU decreased slightly overall, but remained high. Almost 25 million children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Severe housing deprivation affects 7 % of families with children in the EU. The European Pillar of Social Rights underlines children's right to protection from poverty and to equality; it specifically focuses on affordable early childhood education and good-quality care. Migrant and refugee children continued to arrive in Europe seeking protection, although in lower numbers than in 2015 and 2016. While the European Commission provided policy guidance through a Communication on the protection of children in migration, Member States continued efforts to provide appropriate accommodation, education, psychological assistance and general integration measures for children. Implementing the best interests of the child principle remained a practical challenge in the migration context. There was very limited progress in reducing immigration detention of children. Meanwhile, diverse European and national initiatives focused on the risks of radicalisation and violent extremism among young people.*

### 8.1. Tackling child poverty and social exclusion

#### 8.1.1. European Pillar of Social Rights calls for protection from poverty, but child poverty rate remains high

Despite important policy developments in 2017, child poverty remained a persistent challenge. The number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) in the EU remains high. The AROPE indicator measures the EU 2020 target on poverty 'Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion'. It combines three different indicators: 'at risk of poverty', 'severe material deprivation' and 'very low household work intensity'.<sup>1</sup> In 2016, 26.4 % of children were living in such circumstances, according to the latest EUROSTAT data<sup>2</sup> – almost 25 million persons below the age of 18 years. However, in recent years the trend has improved, albeit slowly, as the *Fundamental Rights Report 2017* indicated.<sup>3</sup>

The European Pillar of Social Rights was proclaimed in 2017. (For more information on the Pillar, see

► **Chapter 1).** One of its 20 principles – principle 11 – focuses on child poverty, childcare and support to children. The Pillar states that children have the right to protection from poverty, and that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities. It also enshrines the right of children to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality. Other principles, such as principle 2 on gender equality and principle 3 on equal opportunities, also have direct relevance for the well-being of both boys and girls.<sup>4</sup>

*"Being a poor child is like paying for a crime you didn't commit at all."*

*Girl participating in FRA symposium 'Is Europe doing enough to protect fundamental rights?', Brussels, 28 June 2017*

Civil society's response to the Pillar has been ambivalent, welcoming the package in general, but raising some significant criticisms. Anti-poverty and children's rights organisations have welcomed the explicit reference to children and child poverty in the Pillar, but would have also appreciated cross-references to children's rights in other principles related to health, housing and employment, issues that affect children and their families.<sup>5</sup> Concrete legislative proposals<sup>6</sup> in areas such as minimum

income, minimum wage and funding levels for social protection would all have an impact on families' living standards. The lack of these raised concerns, including among trade unions.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, some organisations criticised the lack of an implementation plan.<sup>8</sup> Critics suggested that an exclusive focus on employment ignores in-work poverty or job insecurity,<sup>9</sup> issues that many families also face.

In its April proposal on the Social Rights Pillar, the European Commission included a state-of-play on the implementation of the 2013 Recommendation 'Investing in children', the key European policy framework for combating child poverty.<sup>10</sup> The Staff Working Document suggests progress in mainly the first two pillars:<sup>11</sup> the areas of parents' access to resources (employment and social services) and to social services (such as early childhood and childcare services).

The least amount of progress has taken place with respect to the third pillar, regarding child participation. The document suggests there is much more scope to involve children in actions and decisions that affect them, such as involving children in policy or service design, or ensuring that policy planning reflects the views of children on services delivered to them.

In the context of the European Semester, the number of country-specific recommendations relating to

children increased from 12 in 2016 to 16 in 2017 (see Figure 8.1). A total of 13 EU Member States received recommendations on childcare services, early childhood education or inclusive education. For the first time, no recommendation in 2017 directly focused on child poverty. Despite high levels of child poverty, the European Commission considers that the reduction in the number of country-specific recommendations on children in recent years was due to the need to focus on areas where Member State action was most needed and because some Member States had improved their policies.<sup>12</sup>

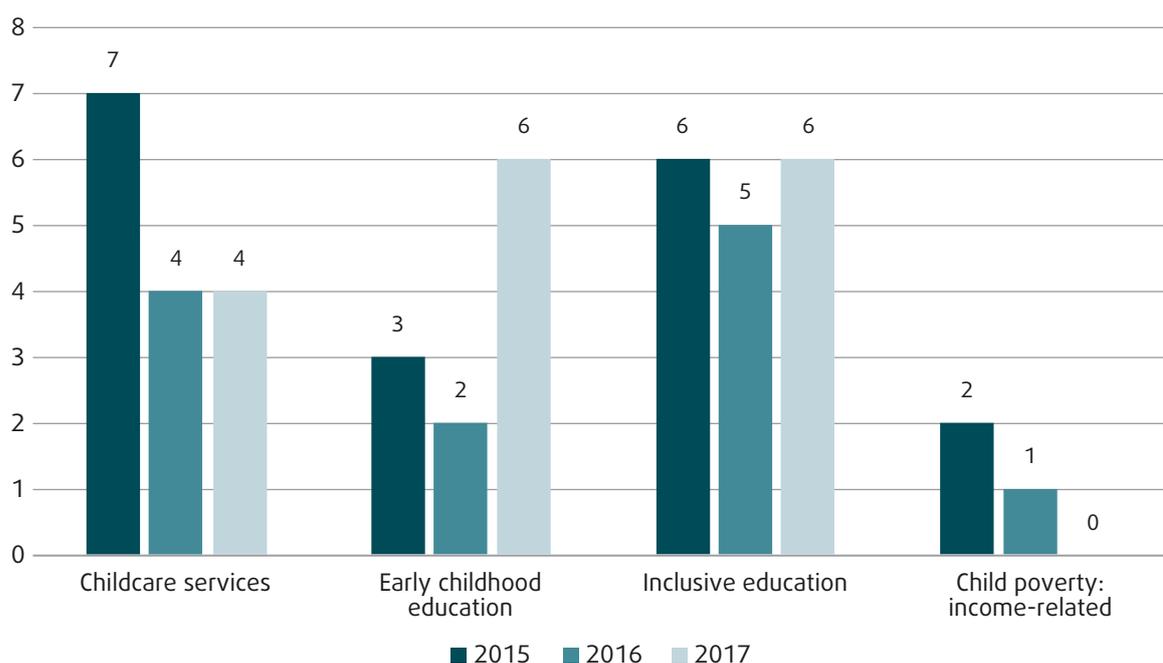
In addition, national reform programmes, which are developed in the European Semester context, do not use the 2013 Recommendation as a guiding policy. Out of 27 national reform programmes, only the **Irish** one made specific reference to the 2013 European Commission recommendation to invest in children.<sup>13</sup> This shows the limited leverage such recommendations have in national policy developments and the European Semester process.

The European Parliament voted for a Preparatory Action on a Child Guarantee in 2017, to be implemented by the Commission, to ensure that every child in poverty can access free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition.<sup>14</sup> The preparatory action's general aim is to analyse the feasibility and possible design, governance and implementation options of a future Child Guarantee Scheme, and whether or not such a scheme would



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Figure 8.1: Number of country-specific recommendations focusing on children in 2015, 2016 and 2017, by area



Source: FRA, 2017 (based on European Semester – Country Specific Recommendations for 2015, 2016 and 2017)

bring added value compared with the current situation. The European Commission intends to use a € 2 million budget on research, regional seminars and an EU-wide conference to analyse the current state of play and the feasibility of such a child guarantee, with a focus on four specific vulnerable groups of children.<sup>15</sup>

There has been progress on only some of the indicators related to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1, 'End poverty in all its forms everywhere', Eurostat data indicate.<sup>16</sup> In March 2017, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in which it encouraged states to promote a child rights-based approach in implementing the SDGs. It also calls on states to pay additional attention to children living in poverty or from marginalised groups when developing measures intended to comply with the SDGs.<sup>17</sup>

### 8.1.2. Housing and homelessness in Member States under the lens

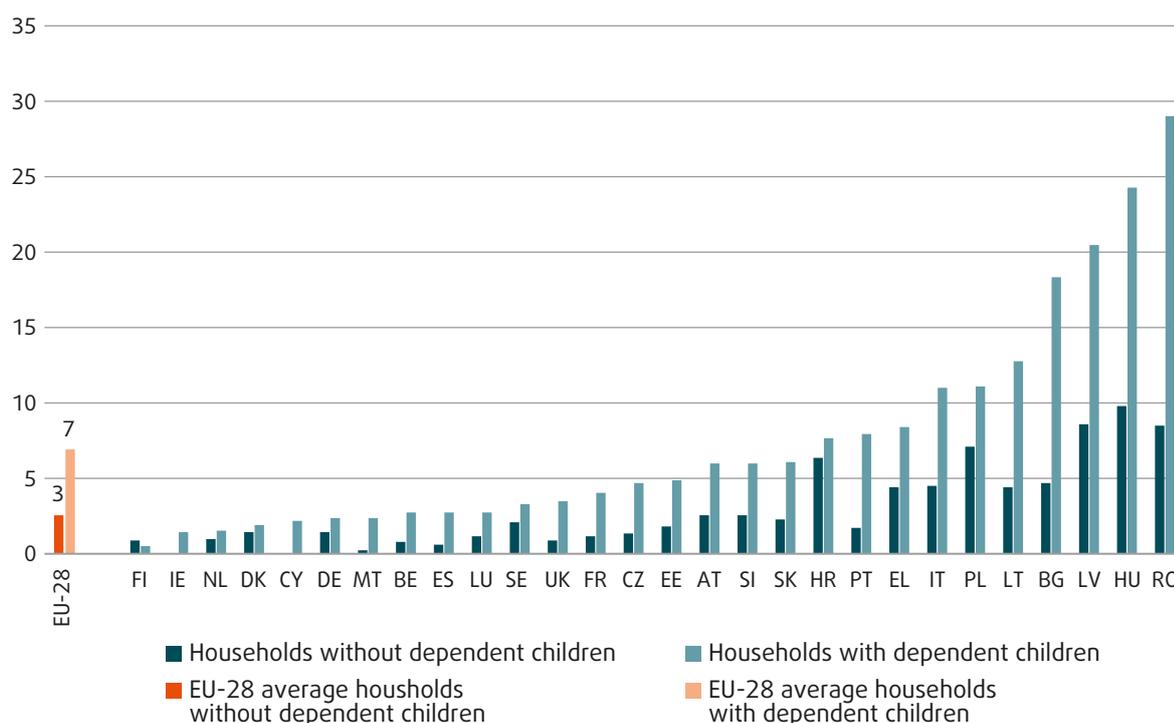
When examining the implementation of the 2013 Recommendation, the European Commission highlighted the problem of severe housing deprivation affecting children and the increased number of children in homeless shelters. It also acknowledged that child poverty is linked with housing deprivation and barriers to accessing education, school attendance, educational attainments, good health and overall wellbeing.<sup>18</sup>

### Severe housing deprivation

'Severe housing deprivation' is defined as living in an overcrowded household with a leaking roof, no bath/shower or no indoor toilet, or in a dwelling considered too dark. A household is overcrowded if it does not have a minimum number of rooms equal to one room for the household; one room per couple in the household; one room for each single person aged 18 or above; one room per pair of single people of the same gender between 12 and 17 years of age; one room for each single person between 12 and 17 years of age and not included in the previous category; and one room per pair of children under 12 years of age.

Figure 8.2 shows the rate of severe housing deprivation in households with and without dependent children in the EU-28. The total for the EU is 7 % for families with children and 3 % when there are no children in the household. Having or not having dependent children has almost no impact on the rate in some Member States, such as **Croatia** or **Denmark**. In other Member States, the likelihood of severe housing deprivation is much higher for families with children, such as in **Portugal** (with a difference of 6 points) or **Lithuania** (difference of 9 points). It is highest in **Romania** (difference of 20 points). Only **Finland** shows a higher rate, although marginally, of housing deprivation for households with no dependent children. Severe housing deprivation particularly affects Roma people

Figure 8.2: Percentage of severe housing deprivation rate by household type, 2016



Source: FRA, 2017 (based on Eurostat (2017), *Severe housing deprivation rate by household type: EU-SILC survey, [ilc\_mdhoo6b]*, last update 19 December 2017)

within the EU, as shown in FRA's second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II).<sup>19</sup> For example, 'insufficient space' is more frequent in Roma households than in the general population, the survey results show.<sup>20</sup> For more information on Roma ► integration, see Chapter 5.

Housing is a matter of national, regional and local competence. However, several European policies have dealt with housing, such as the 2013 Recommendation 'Investing in children'<sup>21</sup> and the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar provides for access to social housing, protection from forced eviction and support for homeless people, all of which can have a direct impact on the living situation of children.<sup>22</sup> Civil society, however, has raised concerns over the implementation of the aspects of the Pillar that deal with housing, given the non-binding nature of the principles and the lack of legislative proposals.<sup>23</sup>

In the European Semester, country-specific recommendations often include the topic of housing. In 2017, **Ireland**,<sup>24</sup> the **Netherlands**,<sup>25</sup> **Sweden**<sup>26</sup> and the **United Kingdom**<sup>27</sup> received recommendations on housing. The European Commission established a Housing Partnership<sup>28</sup> and an Urban Poverty Partnership under the Urban Agenda.<sup>29</sup> Both partnerships are developing action plans touching upon affordable housing as a way to support social cohesion, as well as national measures to combat child poverty and homelessness.

The EU is also supporting the efforts of Member States by funding various housing programmes, the majority of which specifically support families. It does this through the Urban Innovative Actions funds,<sup>30</sup> the Regional Policy EU Invest<sup>31</sup> and the European Regional Development Fund or Cohesion Fund.<sup>32</sup> The projects funded are very diverse, and range from supporting housing for unaccompanied children in Antwerp (**Belgium**)<sup>33</sup> to the construction of 71 social houses for families with children with health problems or disabilities in Sofia (**Bulgaria**).<sup>34</sup>

The Revised European Social Charter, a treaty of the Council of Europe, provides for the right to housing, and addresses adequate standard of housing, reduction in homelessness and affordability of housing.<sup>35</sup> However, only **Finland**, **France**, **Greece**, the **Netherlands**, **Portugal**, **Slovenia** and **Sweden** accepted the right to housing (Article 31) when ratifying the Revised European Social Charter.<sup>36</sup>

Housing is a broad and multifaceted issue and Member States approach it through different actions. In 2017, several Member States adopted new laws or regulations related to social housing, eviction or homelessness. For example, in **Italy**, the Law on urgent provisions on the safety of cities<sup>37</sup> establishes

that, in cases of squatting of buildings, the mayor can decide to prevent forced eviction if children or particularly vulnerable people live in the building. In **Romania**, the parliament adopted an amendment on housing, introducing the concept of 'support housing'. This is a type of social housing for individuals and families who have been evicted through forced implementation procedures because they cannot pay their mortgages.<sup>38</sup> In the Walloon region in **Belgium**, a new decree aims to extend the obligation to provide emergency housing; it introduces modifications to help bring unoccupied dwellings into use, and creates a mechanism to force the sale of social housing to its inhabitants.<sup>39</sup>

## Evictions

The number of families with children evicted every year in Europe is not known and there is no EU-wide collection of such data. National data are not always disaggregated to show if the household had children, and, if so, their gender and age. In 2015, 13 out of 28 EU Member States had no data regarding the characteristics of households affected by eviction, a study shows. Only seven countries had reliable and structured information on eviction.<sup>40</sup>

Local authorities generally ensure that families with children fall within the priority categories for accessing social housing. In addition, some Member States have adopted measures to protect families with children from eviction. For example, in **Sweden**, the National Board of Health and Welfare compared all Swedish municipalities' policies on homelessness and found that 23 % of the municipalities had action plans on how to protect children from evictions.<sup>41</sup> In **Portugal**, it is possible to postpone, also in private contracts, by one year the enforcement of the rental contract termination if the tenant has children below 18 years, or for persons under 26 years attending secondary or higher education.<sup>42</sup>

In **Spain**, the government approved a decree with measures to protect mortgage debtors in particularly vulnerable situations, such as households with children, single-parent households and large families.<sup>43</sup> Measures include suspending eviction for up to four years. Problems with evictions in Spain, however, have prompted severe criticism from civil society<sup>44</sup> and international human rights bodies. In 2017, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights indicated that Spain had violated the right to housing in the case of a family with two young children, who were evicted from a rented room in a flat without being provided with alternative housing.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the Supreme Court declared the eviction of a family with three children in Madrid inappropriate until protection measures for the children were established, and required the previous instance to revise the

eviction decision.<sup>46</sup> A study on the demolition of illegal dwellings in Roma neighbourhoods in **Bulgaria** claimed that, despite the existence of a Roma strategy and action plan, alternative housing is available only as part of pilot projects funded by the EU, while the lack of funds prevents most municipalities from offering municipal housing to evicted Roma families.<sup>47</sup> For more information on Roma integration, see Chapter 5.

#### Promising practice

##### Private sector tackles energy poverty

A private gas company in **Spain**, Gas Fenosa, developed an action plan in 2017. It contains 20 measures to address energy poverty, and has a budget of € 4.5 million. The measures include a free-of-charge phone number with 24-hour support for clients in vulnerable situations and the establishment of a so-called Energy School. The courses at the Energy School target social workers working with families and answer questions such as how to read the bill, reduce the total due amount, reduce energy use or request a deadline extension to pay the bill.

Gas Fenosa also offers a discount of between 25 % and 40 % to clients who fulfil certain need criteria: disability, families with more than three children, long-term unemployed people, etc. For certain categories of persons at risk of social exclusion, the energy supply cannot be interrupted even when bills are not paid.

For more information, see Gas Fenosa's foundation's website.

## Homelessness

The unsystematic nature of measures to prevent eviction, and the delays in accessing social housing, are reflected in the number of homeless people in Europe, including children. Although Eurostat does not collect data on homelessness, some figures are available from national statistical offices and NGO reports. Statistics are often not comparable as some Member States register homeless households as one case, irrespective of the number of individuals concerned. In its 'Second overview of housing exclusion in Europe 2017', the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) draws attention to the alarming trend in Europe of worsening homelessness in all Member States except Finland. This exception shows the effectiveness of implementing a long-term homelessness strategy.<sup>48</sup>

In **Ireland**, recent statistics indicate that 3,000 children are currently homeless, with a reported 27 % increase in the number of homeless families from June 2016 to June 2017.<sup>49</sup> In the **Netherlands**, the Statistics Office publishes figures about the number of homeless people each year, but the information does not

include any figures about children.<sup>50</sup> Disaggregated information is, however, collected at municipal level and a new collaborative project with the central level will start in 2018.

#### Promising practice

##### Providing support to families at risk of homelessness in Austria

In **Austria**, there are a number of support services for people at risk of or in homelessness. They range from consulting, prevention of eviction, help in finding a new home, emergency shelter, day-centres, temporary apartments and assisted living.

During 2017, in seven out of the nine Austrian regions – Burgenland and Carinthia being the exceptions – social organisations provided a dedicated service for the prevention of eviction. People who have difficulties with paying the rent or are at risk of eviction for other reasons can get advice and counselling on how to proceed. There are also specialised services for specific groups, such as women with children and pregnant women.

For more information, see the website of the Austrian government.

International human rights monitoring bodies have raised concerns about the lack of access to adequate housing. In its decision in the case of the *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Ireland*,<sup>51</sup> the European Committee of Social Rights found a violation of Article 16 of the Revised European Social Charter<sup>52</sup> (right of the family to social, legal and economic protection). The complaint was that the Irish legal, policy and administrative framework for housing was insufficient, as were the adequacy, habitability and regeneration of local authority housing. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government of **Ireland** has since adopted 'Rebuilding Ireland', an Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.<sup>53</sup> The plan envisages concrete targets in the areas of homelessness, social housing and the rental market, and includes several legislative proposals.

## 8.2. Protecting children in migration remains a daunting challenge

People continue to arrive in Europe and apply for asylum, but their number has considerably decreased. More than 656,800 persons applied for asylum in the EU in 2017, including 199,665 children.<sup>54</sup> The number of children decreased almost by half compared to 2016, when 398,260 applied for asylum.<sup>55</sup> Given the temporary reintroduction of border controls,

the EU-Turkey statement<sup>56</sup> and changing migration routes, there were drastically fewer applications in some Member States, such as **Austria, Bulgaria** and **Germany**. However, in other Member States, mainly on the Mediterranean arrival route, such as **Italy, Greece, Spain**, as well as in **France**, the number of applications remained similar or increased compared to 2016.<sup>57</sup>

Unaccompanied children filed 63,245 asylum applications in 2016, according to the latest available Eurostat figures.<sup>58</sup> In **Italy**, by 31 December 2017, 18,303 unaccompanied children, 93 % male and 7 % female, were registered as being present, according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Politics.<sup>59</sup> In **Greece**, 5,446 unaccompanied children arrived between January and December 2017, according to UNHCR: 5,204 boys and 242 girls.<sup>60</sup>

These statistics, however, represent only part of the picture. Data collection about children in migration remains a critical issue. The European Commission's Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography has expanded the datasets within its Dynamic Data Hub to include data on children in migration, disaggregated by age, on asylum, residence permits, resettlement, arrivals and UNHCR's populations of concern. Nevertheless, to better understand the necessary policy interventions, data are still needed in areas such as Dublin transfers, family unity and reunification procedures, irregular border crossings, children returned, children in immigration detention, missing children, as well as disaggregation by gender. Eurostat, as a follow-up to the Commission's 2017 Communication on the protection of children in migration, is already working on specific proposals to respond to policy needs raised. Eurostat has added a separate folder on children in migration to improve the visibility of children in data already collected.<sup>61</sup>

### 8.2.1. International and European efforts to protect children in migration

In April 2017, the European Commission published the long-awaited Communication on the protection of children in migration. It sets out a series of actions to be taken in view of the high numbers of migrant children arriving and living in the EU and the growing pressure on national migration and child protection systems.<sup>62</sup> The Council of the EU upheld the recommendations in its conclusions on the protection of children in migration adopted on 8 June 2017.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, in May 2017, the Council of Europe adopted its Action Plan on protecting refugee and migrant children 2017–2019.<sup>64</sup>

In its Communication, the Commission raises a series of issues, ranging from addressing root causes of migration and protecting children on migration routes,

to suggesting actions and appropriate treatment of children arriving or staying in the EU. It calls on Member States to actively implement in relations with non-EU countries the 2017 EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child.<sup>65</sup> The Communication requires child-friendly and gender-sensitive procedures when, for instance, assessing age or taking fingerprints and biometric data. FRA has published a report on the fundamental rights implications of large-scale EU information systems and the use of biometrics, including the implications for children.<sup>66</sup> As one of the actions that the Communication planned, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) is developing a guide on age assessment.<sup>67</sup> The Council of Europe's Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child is elaborating recommendations on age assessment and guardianship, for consideration and adoption by the Committee of Ministers in 2019. These recommendations will also support the network of guardianship authorities created in 2017 by the European Commission, and coordinated by the Dutch guardianship authority, NIDOS.

A positive development has been the appointment of child protection staff in the hotspots in **Greece**, a recommendation deriving from the Communication. However, the reception conditions in Greek hotspots are still a major challenge. These include a lack of appropriate accommodation – with unheated containers or tents being used – and very limited educational activities.<sup>68</sup> During 2017, FRA, together with EASO, provided training to the appointed child protection staff and other local actors to identify the best ways to deal with the protection of unaccompanied children. Following an urgent monitoring round, the Lanzarote Committee adopted a Special report outlining 37 recommendations to Member States to protect refugee and migrant children, especially girls, from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.<sup>69</sup>

Appropriate accommodation is not enough to secure the future well-being of children. Indeed, the Communication stresses that children also need access to education, healthcare, psychosocial support, leisure activities and integration-related measures. Member States need to ensure durable solutions for all children. The 2017 Recommendation on the Return Directive also calls on them to establish clear rules on the legal status of unaccompanied children, based on an individual best interests assessment.<sup>70</sup> The return of unaccompanied children is highly contested and often difficult to implement in practice, especially when the family members are not found. According to the latest guidance by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW Committee), children can be returned only if there are guarantees that they will be appropriately cared for and that their fundamental



rights will be respected, and if it is in the best interests of the child.<sup>71</sup>

### 8.2.2. Immigration detention of children

Under EU law, the Return Directive regulates the detention of migrants in an irregular situation pending removal, and the Reception Conditions Directive governs detention of applicants for international protection. Article 28 of the Dublin Regulation also envisages detention in the context of transfers between Member States. These instruments emphasise that children are to be detained only as a last resort and only if less coercive measures cannot be applied effectively. Such detention must be for the shortest time possible.<sup>72</sup> The stringent requirements flowing from the Charter and from Article 3 (prohibition of torture) and Article 5 (right to liberty and security) of the ECHR mean that deprivation of liberty will be in line with EU law only in exceptional cases.

Different European actors paid particular attention to immigration detention of children with various important initiatives in 2017, as illustrated in Figure 8.3. At the EU level, the European Commission's Communication on the protection of children in migration underlined that deprivation of liberty is allowed only under exceptional circumstances and never in prison accommodation.<sup>73</sup> This clarification is important, given that, a few weeks earlier, it had also recommended to Member States not to ban immigration detention of children.<sup>74</sup> The European Forum on the Rights of the Child was devoted to children deprived

of liberty, and discussed concrete ways to promote alternatives to detention for children.<sup>75</sup> FRA published a report on the European legal and policy framework on immigration detention of children.<sup>76</sup> Later in the year, the Council of Europe (CoE) held a major conference on ending immigration detention of children.<sup>77</sup> The CoE's Parliamentary Assembly continued its campaign to end immigration detention of children, publishing a guide on monitoring<sup>78</sup> and a study of immigration detention practices and the use of alternatives.<sup>79</sup>

At the UN level, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the CMW Committee issued two Joint General Comments in which they deemed immigration detention of children a violation of the rights of the child. They affirmed that children "should never be detained for reasons related to their or their parents' migration status".<sup>80</sup>

Children's right to protection and care and the principle of the best interests of the child are the starting points when examining deprivation of liberty of children. Detention has a negative impact on children, no matter in which context it takes place. Deprivation of liberty can have short- and long-term negative effects on the physical, psychological, social and general development of a child, as research shows.<sup>81</sup> The impact of detention can persist long after the child has been released. Detention has undeniable immediate and long-term mental-health effects on asylum-seeking children, mental-health experts report.<sup>82</sup> Although some children recover, for others, mental-health effects may continue for a long time, according to child psychiatrists who work with



children after their release.<sup>83</sup> For this reason, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) considers the child's "extreme vulnerability" to be the "decisive factor and takes precedence over considerations relating to the status of illegal immigrant".<sup>84</sup> In a case decided in December 2017, the ECtHR found that the detention of an Iraqi family in an inadequate facility for a period of 32 or 41 hours – the exact length of detention was disputed – amounted to the **Bulgarian** authorities having subjected the family to inhuman and degrading treatment.<sup>85</sup>

Respecting the right to liberty and security requires states to adopt less intrusive alternatives to detention. Where the authorities fail to examine all alternatives – including placement in an open facility without restrictions on the child's fundamental rights – the detention of children will be considered arbitrary and a violation of the right to liberty and security. Against this background, the European Commission encouraged EU Member States to ensure that alternatives to detention are available and accessible and to monitor their use, indicating that it would support initiatives in this direction.<sup>86</sup>

Some EU Member States made progress in the use of alternatives to detention. In **Poland**, apprehended migrants in an irregular situation include a significant number of families with children. The percentage of decisions imposing an alternative to detention increased from 11 % in 2014 to over 23 % in 2017. Almost 80 % of the 2,139 migrants subject to alternatives to detention in 2017 respected the conditions imposed.<sup>87</sup> This did not, however, result in a decrease in the number of children in detention, given that families who breached the conditions imposed with the alternatives to detention were subsequently placed in administrative detention. In **France**, administrative detention in cases of families with children in an irregular situation has increased,<sup>88</sup> despite recent ECtHR judgments condemning such practices as incompatible with children's rights and best interests.<sup>89</sup> In **Belgium**, a coalition<sup>90</sup> of more than 100 NGOs has taken a stand against the construction of a new closed centre for the detention of families with children.

One tool to reduce the need for deprivation of liberty in the context of returns is case management. This approach prioritises social work and engagement with migrants over the use of coercive measures. Through regular contacts with social workers who are independent from the immigration authorities, migrant children are given an opportunity to understand their situation and the realistic options they have. A European Alternatives to Detention Network, established in 2017, links civil society organisations developing case-management-based pilot projects.<sup>91</sup> This network supports different projects in EU Member States, including a case-management pilot project with

50 people in **Bulgaria**. This specific project currently mainly addresses single men, but could equally be applied to children. Nevertheless, the results, in terms of preventing people from absconding, are revealing: after one year, in December 2017, only two persons had absconded, four had returned voluntarily, two had obtained humanitarian status and the remaining 42 were still participating in the project.<sup>92</sup>

Although no legal norm in human rights or EU law explicitly prohibits immigration detention of children, there is an increasing consensus among international organisations, treaty bodies and other human rights protection mechanisms that immigration detention of children contradicts the duty to provide care imposed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As international human rights law is evolving, an increasing gap is emerging between EU law and the way international human rights law is interpreted.

### 8.2.3. Implementing best interests of the child in migration context proves challenging

Protecting migrant children remains challenging, as FRA's monthly updates on migration have shown.<sup>93</sup> Given the reduction in the number of children arriving, the focus is increasingly on long-term needs, where a durable solution for each child needs to be found. In this context, assessing the best interests of the child becomes even more essential.

The best interests of the child is a complex concept which, according to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, forms a principle of law, an actual right, and a rule of procedure.<sup>94</sup> It is established in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 3), in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Article 24), in EU secondary law and in most national legislation related to children. In the area of asylum, EU directives and regulations have made abundant reference<sup>95</sup> to the need to consider the best interests of the child in different processes. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child often mentions the need to apply best interests in practice in its concluding observations when examining national reports.<sup>96</sup>

The best interests of the child is an important element in decisions taken by the CJEU, such as in *C. Chavez-Vilchez and Others v. Raad van bestuur van de Sociale verzekeringsbank and Others*,<sup>97</sup> or in pending cases, as evidenced in the Opinion by Advocate-General Bot in the case on family reunification.<sup>98</sup> It is also important in national case law. For example, in **Slovenia**, an administrative court rejected the Ministry of the Interior's decision to return a Somali woman and her child to Italy, the Member State through which they entered the EU; it held that assessing the best

interests of the child required the authority to make a more detailed and deliberate investigation of the conditions in the Member State to which it proposed to return them.<sup>99</sup> In **Luxembourg**, an administrative court granted permission to an Albanian boy to stay until the age of 18, based on the best interests of the child, going against the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' decision to remove the boy, who did not qualify for international protection.<sup>100</sup>

*“An adult’s judgment of a child’s best interests cannot override the obligation to respect all the child’s rights under the Convention.”*

*UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 14, paragraph 4*

*“Children should be always involved when adults take decisions that affect them.”*

*Girl participant at FRA symposium ‘Is Europe doing enough to protect fundamental rights?’, Brussels, 28 June 2017*

Despite its broad inclusion at all levels of legislation, the practical implementation of the best interests principle remains a challenge. The Committee on the Rights of the Child and the CMW Committee<sup>101</sup> provided some guidance on best interests implementation in 2017, as shown in [Table 8.1](#).

Best interest-assessment practices in Member States are diverse, and depend not only on the Member State but also on the different actors or specific procedure involved. Some Member States might assess best interests on a regular basis and rather informally, or more formally only in certain procedures. This more formal procedure may have different names in Member States: determination process, risk assessment or something else.<sup>102</sup> Initial evidence suggests that most assessments of best interests are considered informal, undertaken on an ad hoc basis, by one or two officials, with no systematic method, and with no record made of them.

Although the EU *acquis* enshrines the legal obligation to consider the best interests of the child, the data collection undertaken for this report found only a few structured systems in place where trained and competent staff follow a method, tools or concrete guidance.

Nevertheless, throughout 2017, different national authorities and organisations developed and used clear processes and methods that specify how the best interests of the child will be assessed in practice. For example, in the **Netherlands**, the University of Groningen developed a tool that allows a multidisciplinary team to assess the best interests of the child and prepare a report for use in administrative or judicial migration proceedings.<sup>103</sup> The model is based on the guidance provided by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and includes 14 aspects to consider when assessing the best interests of the child.<sup>104</sup>

In **Ireland**, the best interests assessment is called the ‘care plan’. It is a statutory requirement;<sup>105</sup> a social worker of the Child Protection Services carries it out during the first week of the stay in care. The voice of the child is central, and during the interview the child can bring a person of trust. Teachers, family members and NGOs can be consulted when developing the care plan.

**Table 8.1: Elements to consider when assessing the best interests of the child, according to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the CMW Committee**

General elements	Specific elements in context of migration
Care, protection and safety of the child	Child’s specific reasons for migrating
Situation of vulnerability	Social and cultural contexts
Child’s views	Belonging to a minority group
Child’s identity	Need for comprehensive and long-term solutions
Right to health	Promoting integration
Right to education	Priority to family- and community-based accommodation
Family environment and relations	In case of a return to the country of origin, ensuring the child will be safe and cared for and his/her rights ensured
	Assessment carried out by actors independent from migration-enforcement authorities

Source: FRA, 2018 (based on UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 14; and UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child and CMW Committee, Joint general comment No. 3 on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration, 16 November 2017)

In **Sweden**, the assessment is called the 'child impact analysis'. It is carried out at municipal level and recorded in a digital online migration database. The case handler cannot proceed if best interests of the child-related steps have not been completed. The system was developed by national authorities together with the Ombudsperson for children and is currently under review. In **Luxembourg**, the government took the initiative to create an 'Evaluation Committee for the best interests of the child', which is to evaluate, on a case-by-case basis, the best interests of unaccompanied children who have not been granted international protection. The committee is to be formed of representatives of different authorities, such as from the youth system, reception, immigration and the National Children's Office. Its opinions will not be binding, but will have an advisory status.<sup>106</sup>

EASO is currently developing guidance on the best interests assessment to be published in 2018. It will provide guidance to Member States on specific elements of best interests assessments in the asylum procedure. For more information on asylum and migration, see Chapter 6.

### 8.3. Extremism and radicalisation of children and young people

Terrorist attacks in several Member States in 2017 again raised the debate about the danger of radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism. However, available research data are scarce, with no EU-wide research, and they do not always focus on children and young people or include a gender perspective.<sup>107</sup> Regarding online radicalisation, the current evidence on the link between the internet, social media and violent radicalisation is limited and inconclusive.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, at the EU level, the issue of children and young people being at risk of radicalisation is attracting particular attention, since children might be more vulnerable to being influenced and manipulated by adults and extremist propaganda, requiring the development of tailored responses.<sup>109</sup>

#### 8.3.1. Stepping up efforts to counter radicalisation

Radicalisation is the process leading to violent extremism and terrorism. The EU institutions in 2017 multiplied their actions to support Member States in exercising their powers in the field of protecting children and young people from radicalisation and extremist propaganda. Preventing and countering it is a primary component of the EU policy to fight

against terrorist threats and a priority for the EU internal security strategy.<sup>110</sup> National security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State, as provided by Article 4 (2) of the Treaty on European Union.<sup>111</sup> However, fighting the spread of radicalisation, especially online, and preventing and countering violent extremism are among the priorities of Member States' cooperation at the EU level.<sup>112</sup>

The Directive on combating terrorism reflects the need to pay special attention to protecting and preventing children from being radicalised. The directive was adopted in March 2017 and is to be incorporated into national legislation by 8 September 2018.<sup>113</sup> It calls on Member States to adopt the necessary measures to ensure that, in sentencing, judges take into account that criminal offences related to recruiting and training for terrorism may have targeted children.<sup>114</sup>

The European Council updated the Guidelines for the EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism in 2017. It pointed out that "policy responses need to make use of all relevant policy areas and instruments, including criminal justice, education, social inclusion, citizenship and European values" to protect children and prevent their radicalisation.<sup>115</sup>

The European Commission established a High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) in 2017.<sup>116</sup> It brings together Member States' competent authorities, the European Commission and EU services, institutions and agencies, including FRA. It aims to enhance efforts to prevent and counter radicalisation, including of children and young people, and to improve coordination and cooperation among all relevant stakeholders.

In its first report in December 2017,<sup>117</sup> the HLCEG-R underlines that its work refers to all forms of radicalisation, but sets Islamist extremist ideology as a priority area. The report also points out that special attention should be paid to right-wing extremism. It provides a number of recommendations for the Commission and for Member States, recognising education, social inclusion and youth policies as important factors in tackling radicalisation. In this respect, it recommends raising awareness and implementing measures to prevent early school leaving or school exclusion; enhancing equity and social cohesion; and encouraging active citizenship and promoting such common fundamental values as freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination. Children are among the selected priority topics for the HLCEG-R in 2018.

One main focus of the EU's actions in 2017 was the treatment of young European 'foreign fighters' in conflict zones such as Syria and Iraq returning to Europe; children born to and raised by European

'foreign fighters' in those areas coming to Europe (child 'returnees'); children remaining in the EU but with parents or siblings who have left for Syria/Iraq; and refugee and migrant children arriving in Europe from that region. Because of their exposure to radicalised environments and, in some cases, violence, these children and young people are perceived as a potential threat, but also as victims. The EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator carried out a survey in 2017 aimed at identifying Member States' approaches to dealing with child returnees, including refugee children who arrive in the EU.<sup>118</sup> There is not much experience yet in dealing with these children, the survey shows. Handling children in this context must give due importance to, among other considerations, the role of child protection authorities, the importance of an individual risk- and needs-assessment for each child, and tailored responses, as well as to respect for the rights of the child, the survey report suggests.

The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), which the European Commission funds and supports, launched an initiative entitled RAN Young, calling for the involvement of young persons in the development of anti-radicalisation programmes.<sup>119</sup> Engaging children not just as beneficiaries, but as partners, is also a principle for any programme developed, as suggested by research.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, RAN has established a specific working group focusing on youth, families and communities and published a manual on responses to the issue of foreign fighters and their families returning to their home countries in the EU from conflict zones. The manual highlights the need for a gender perspective when dealing with women and girls. It suggests that women returnees are often isolated, and might require specific support given possible traumatic experiences.<sup>121</sup> A report by the European Parliament analyses the motivation of women and girls to join ISIS and provides a number of recommendations to address the misconception that female radicalisation can be explained as a single-causal process, predominately fed by emotional or personal factors.<sup>122</sup>

In December 2017, the EU's European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an Opinion highlighting the major role that civil society actors, especially youth organisations, play in preventing the radicalisation and extremism of young people.<sup>123</sup> The opinion underlines the importance of inclusive formal and non-formal education, the social responsibility of religious communities and the need for social media businesses to get involved in countering hate speech and extremist narratives.

The European Commission addressed the removal of terrorist and violent extremist online content in its Communication on tackling illegal content online, adopted in September 2017.<sup>124</sup> The EU Internet Forum

also adopted an Action Plan to combat terrorist propaganda online.<sup>125</sup> The Commission has established the Civil Society Empowerment Programme, which undertakes various activities to promote the involvement of civil society.<sup>126</sup> For example, RAN organised 27 training sessions around Europe for civil society organisations, covering the skills and knowledge needed to develop online counter- and alternative-narrative campaigns to address radicalisation and violent extremism, and promote moderate voices.<sup>127</sup>

The UN Security Council has also emphasised the need to support education programmes to prevent young people from accepting terrorist narratives, and the need to engage a wide range of actors, including youth, families, women and civil society in general.<sup>128</sup> The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) produced a manual on recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist groups, focusing on prevention, justice for children, rehabilitation and reintegration.<sup>129</sup>

### Promising practice

#### Developing counter-narratives in Germany

Germany has set up an umbrella programme to prevent extremism and radicalisation, with children and young persons a key target group. '*Demokratie leben!*' (Live Democracy!) began in 2015; the German Government gave it € 104.5 million in funding in 2017. Most of its initiatives focus on raising awareness regarding racism, antisemitism, homophobia and online hate.

One of the projects that it funds focuses on civic education on Islamophobia and Islamism among peers. Called '*Was postest du?*' ('What are you posting?'), it aims to provide alternative perspectives to challenge Islamist narratives in social networks. Muslim adults enter into online discussions with young Muslim people, encouraging them to develop individual responses to relevant societal topics. Follow-up projects are taking up these experiences – for instance, developing online videos or tools for schools, countering radical propaganda. All of the initiatives render visible the diversity of Muslim approaches and intervene in early stages of radicalisation.

*For more information, see the website of the 'Live Democracy' programme and of Ufuq.de.*

The HLCEG-R has also emphasised the need to map, promote research into and evaluate the impact of anti-radicalisation programmes.<sup>130</sup> There is little research on this. For example, the Department for Education in the **United Kingdom** surveyed how local authorities respond to radicalisation cases, and what social interventions worked in 10 municipalities. The report makes a number of recommendations,

including strengthening multiagency coordination and information sharing, working with the families of the children, and establishing a single referral system.<sup>131</sup> The European Commission funded the initiative IMPACT Europe, which aims to fill the gap in knowledge and understanding of what works in tackling violent extremism. This project came to an end in 2017, with the development of an evaluation guide, a database of interventions, a compilation of lessons learned and a training manual.<sup>132</sup>

### 8.3.2. Member States' national agendas target radicalisation

Addressing radicalisation and violent extremism remained high on the policy agenda of some Member States during 2017. Most Member States have implemented programmes in the field of radicalisation, ranging from action plans and training of police or teachers, to developing educational programmes for schools<sup>133</sup> and creating centres of expertise.

For example, the government of **Denmark** presented a National Action Plan to combat radicalisation. The priorities for 2017 include improving the capacities of educational institutions to prevent radicalisation and extremism through tailor-made educational material and guidance for professionals, dialogue activities, and online campaigns with a focus on strengthening critical thinking, particularly among children and young people.<sup>134</sup> In the **Netherlands**, a report from the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service and the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism focused on what to do with children and young people returning from Islamic State (IS) territory.<sup>135</sup>

The **Slovak** Ministry of Education published Pedagogical-organisational Guidelines for School 2017–2018, with recommendations on preventing extremism and radicalisation in schools.<sup>136</sup> The

**Swedish** Agency for Youth and Civil Society published a guide on how civil society actors and municipalities can cooperate in actions counteracting extremism that promotes violence.<sup>137</sup>

In **Belgium**, the Wallonia–Brussels Federation opened a centre for help and care of persons affected by radicalisation and violent extremism. It offers systematic individualised care to children and adults susceptible to radicalisation and provides support to families. Concretely, it provides a telephone contact line and psycho-social assistance, initiates tailor-made disengagement paths, and coordinates a research centre.<sup>138</sup>

#### Promising practice

##### Using education to address the radicalisation of young people

In **Belgium**, an educational tool accompanies *Lettres à Nour*, a play that tells the story of the correspondence between a father and his daughter who went to fight for IS. The tool is divided into nine chapters, each of which deals with a topic such as Islam, geopolitical considerations or manipulation methods. The tool is meant to serve as a resource for teachers of students in years 5 and 6 to generate in-depth reflection on the phenomenon of radicalisation in the classroom.

*For more information, see the webpage on the play.*

In **Sweden**, the Dialogue Compass offers governmental-developed educational material for professionals (such as social workers, teachers, police officers, nurses and youth leaders) who meet young people at risk of radicalisation. The material aims to prevent radicalisation of young people by engaging in supportive and preventive dialogue.

*For more information, see the project website.*



## FRA opinions

In line with the trend of the previous two years, the number of children in the EU living at risk of poverty or social exclusion continued to decrease. Nevertheless, almost 25 million children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion; this requires the urgent attention of the EU and its Member States. Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights provides that “[c]hildren shall have the right to such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being”. The European Semester in 2017 included an increased number of country-specific recommendations related to children – but, for the first time, none related to child poverty. EU Member States make very limited use of the European Commission’s 2013 Recommendation ‘Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage’ in their National Reform Programmes as part of the European Semester. Although it has been criticised by civil society actors, the European Pillar of Social Rights might present an opportunity to change child poverty rates and reinforce the Commission’s 2013 Recommendation, the implementation of which the Commission evaluated in 2017.

### FRA opinion 8.1

*The European Union and its Member States should ensure they deliver on the commitments included in the European Pillar of Social Rights to protect children from poverty, provide access to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality without discrimination. They should also ensure the right of girls and boys from disadvantaged backgrounds to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities. The implementation of the Pillar requires concrete legislative proposals, action plans, budgetary allocation and monitoring systems in all areas that affect children and their families, such as employment, gender equality, access to health services, education and affordable housing.*

*EU Member States should make use of the Commission’s 2013 Recommendation ‘Investing in children’ when presenting their National Reform Programmes for the European Semester.*

Seven per cent of families with children in the EU experience severe housing deprivation. They are living in overcrowded households with at least one of the following: a leaking roof, no bath/shower and no indoor toilet, or insufficient light. Despite the lack of EU-wide data on evictions and homelessness, reports from national statistical offices and NGOs highlight an increased number of children in homeless shelters. Article 34 (3) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights recognises “[t]he right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance

with the rules laid down by Community law and national laws and practices”. The European Pillar of Social Rights’ principles also include access to social housing, protection from forced eviction and support to homeless people – but, in contrast to the Revised European Social Charter, the Pillar does not establish any binding measures. However, when ratifying the Revised European Social Charter, only seven Member States accepted as binding the provision on the right to housing.

### FRA opinion 8.2

*EU Member States should establish the fight against severe housing deprivation as a political priority and ensure that families with children, especially those living at risk of poverty, have priority access to social housing or are provided with adequate housing assistance. Relevant authorities should address homelessness and implement measures that include the prevention or delay of evictions of families with children, especially during winter. While doing so, Member States should make use of various housing funding programmes that the EU offers.*

*The EU should promote regional and cross-national exchange of practices related to practical measures to prevent evictions of families with children. It should also promote EU-wide efforts to collect data on evictions of families with children and on homelessness.*

The number of asylum seekers and refugees arriving in Europe decreased in 2017. Fewer than 200,000 children applied for asylum in the EU, a reduction of almost 50 % compared with 2016. The European Commission’s 2017 Communication setting out actions to protect children in migration was a positive step forward. The best interests of the child is a well-established international human rights law principle enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 3), the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Article 24) and EU secondary law, as well as in most national legislation related to children. However, there is a shortage of guidance, data collected for FRA’s *Fundamental Rights Report 2018* show; only a few Member States have developed structured processes and methods to implement the best interests of the child in practice.

FRA opinion 8.3

*EU Member States should formalise procedures appropriate for their national contexts for assessing the best interests of the child in the area of asylum or migration. Such procedures should clearly define situations when a formal best interests determination is necessary, who is responsible, how it is recorded and what gender and cultural-sensitive methodology it should follow.*

*The EU could facilitate this process by coordinating it, mapping current practice and guiding the process, through the existing networks of Member States on the rights of the child and the protection of children in migration, which the European Commission coordinates.*

Children continue to be detained for immigration purposes. However, a number of Member States have taken positive steps towards developing alternatives to detention. The EU *acquis* establishes that children are to be detained only as a last resort and only if less coercive measures cannot be applied effectively. Such detention must be for the shortest period of time possible. At the United Nations level, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families issued two Joint General Comments in which they deem immigration detention of children a violation of the rights of the child. They affirm that children “should never be detained for reasons related to their or their parents’ migration status”. The stringent requirements flowing from the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and from Articles 3 (prohibition of torture) and 5 (right to liberty and security) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) mean that deprivation of liberty will be in line with EU law only in exceptional cases.

FRA opinion 8.4

*To promote children’s right to protection and care, the EU and its Member States should develop credible and effective non-custodial alternatives that would make it unnecessary to detain children during asylum procedures or for return purposes, regardless of whether they are in the EU alone or with their families. This could include building on, for example, case management, alternative care, counselling and coaching.*

*The European Commission should consider the systematic monitoring of the use of immigration detention for children and other people in a vulnerable situation.*

Radicalisation and violent extremism, rooted in different ideologies, is a reality in Europe. The establishment of the EU High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) is a promising development towards a comprehensive response. A number of fundamental rights concerns come into play in the area of radicalisation and in implementing the EU’s internal security strategy. Member States have implemented a combination of law enforcement measures, but also established educational programmes or centres of support for children at risk of radicalisation and their families, or promoted alternative narratives on online platforms.

FRA opinion 8.5

*EU Member States should address the complex phenomenon of radicalisation through a holistic, multidimensional approach going beyond security and law enforcement measures. For this, Member States should establish programmes that promote citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination, in particular in educational settings. Member States should encourage effective coordination among existing actors in child protection, justice, social and youth care, health and education systems to facilitate comprehensive integrated intervention.*



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