



FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC & INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

Drafting of the National Action Plan for the Child Guarantee

March 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

The European Child Guarantee (ECG) was enacted by the EU Council Recommendation in June 2021. The purpose of the ECG is to ensure that every child in Europe that faces the problem of poverty or social exclusion has access to a set of basic services. These services include pre-school education and care, education and school activities, healthcare, nutrition and housing.

In this framework, the EU Member States have committed to submit their national action plans by the 15th of March 2022. The main objectives of the action plans are to provide information on existing and planned measures in order to implement the guarantee, to facilitate the exchange of information and know-how between Member States, to define the framework for monitoring the progress of the implementation of the Recommendation and finally to inform the citizens about existing and planned measures and available structures for the implementation of the ECG.

In each Member State, a national coordinator is appointed to coordinate the preparation of the national action plan. In Greece, the role of national coordinator for the preparation of the National Action Plan (NAP) has been undertaken by the National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA). Within the framework of its responsibilities, EKKA has invited the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE) to provide advisory support services for the drafting of the NAP.

This report is submitted in the context of the cooperation between IOBE and EKKA, with the objective to strengthen the content of a discussion draft for the NAP. In particular, the next chapter of the report presents the basic definitions of children in need and target groups and summarizes key facts on the extent of child poverty and barriers of access to basic services. Then, quantitative and qualitative targets are presented, for the 2025 and 2030 horizon, which are proposed to contribute to the monitoring framework for the fulfillment of the Recommendation for Children in Greece in the coming period. Finally, the report includes an analysis for the prioritization of the target groups, highlighting the particularities of Greece, especially in terms of its geographic characteristics i.e., the large number of islands and remote areas created by the country's special geomorphology.

2. IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN IN NEED AND BARRIERS THEY FACE IN ACCESSING SERVICES

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to identify children in need in Greece as well as the obstacles they face in accessing five (5) significant areas and services which are considered essential for the well-being of children and that include: (a) preschool education and care, (b) education, (c) health care, (d) healthy nutrition and (e) adequate/appropriate housing.

The term "children in need" includes all children at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Both Eurostat and the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) publish and provide statistical information on the risk of poverty and social exclusion rates for both children and adults in the EU and Greece, mainly in the context of the annual sampling survey on Income and Living Conditions of Households (EU-SILC). The key figures for children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in EU countries are therefore known and estimated on the basis of Eurostat and EU-SILC definitions. The ECG Recommendation proposes to focus on six (6) specific groups of vulnerable children, which include (a) homeless children or children who face severe housing deprivation, (b) children with disabilities, (c) children with mental health problems; (d) children with an immigrant / refugee background and children belonging to ethnic minorities (mainly Roma children); (e) children in institutional care; and (f) children in "precarious family situations" (a category which includes various family situations that may lead to poverty or social exclusion of children, such as living with a parent with a long-term health problem or disability, children having a minor mother etc.). At this point it should be highlighted that finding data and statistics for some of these groups of children is a challenging task in the absence of uniform and commonly accepted definitions, in the absence or inadequacy of relevant surveys involving children and administrative difficulties in identifying these children.

2.2 Children in need because of risk of poverty or social exclusion

Before examining the available data for the sub-categories of vulnerable children mentioned above, key indicators on poverty and social exclusion of children in Greece are briefly presented. The study Deep Dive on Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Greece, which was drafted under the coordination of UNICEF in order to support of the National Action Plan, makes an extensive presentation and analysis of the relevant indicators and statistics.

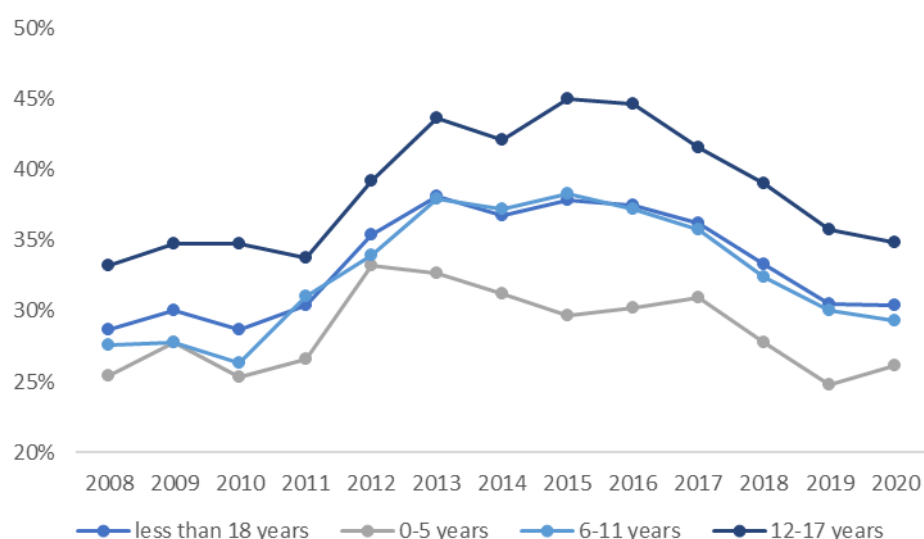
According to EU-SILC data for 2020¹, 30.4% of children (under 18 years old) lived in households experiencing poverty or social exclusion in Greece². Before the crisis (2008), 28.7% of children were affected by poverty or social exclusion, with the percentage significantly deteriorating during the crisis period and reaching 38.1% in 2013. In addition, during the period 2013 -2018 the difference from the EU-27 average exceeded 11 percentage points, while in 2020 it decreased to 8 percentage points. (Figure 2.1). The risk of poverty or social exclusion is higher

¹ The survey questions mainly concern the previous 12 months (for the 2020 survey, the reference year is 2019 and so on).

² Based on the European Strategy for 2030, the index for poverty and social exclusion (AROPE) is calculated differently (mainly, in terms of the exclusion) and for Greece it has a value of 30.8%.

at the age of 12-17 years (34.9% or 233,000 children), compared to 29.3% (or 188,000 children) at the age of 6-11 years, while the lowest percentage (26.1% or 131,000 children) is observed amongst children under 6 years of age (Figure 2.1).

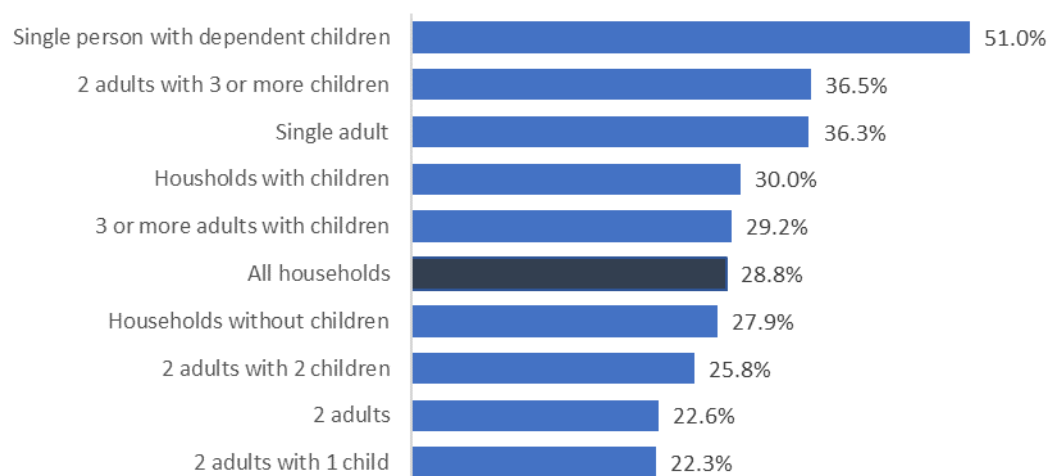
Figure 2.1: Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%) by age group, 2020



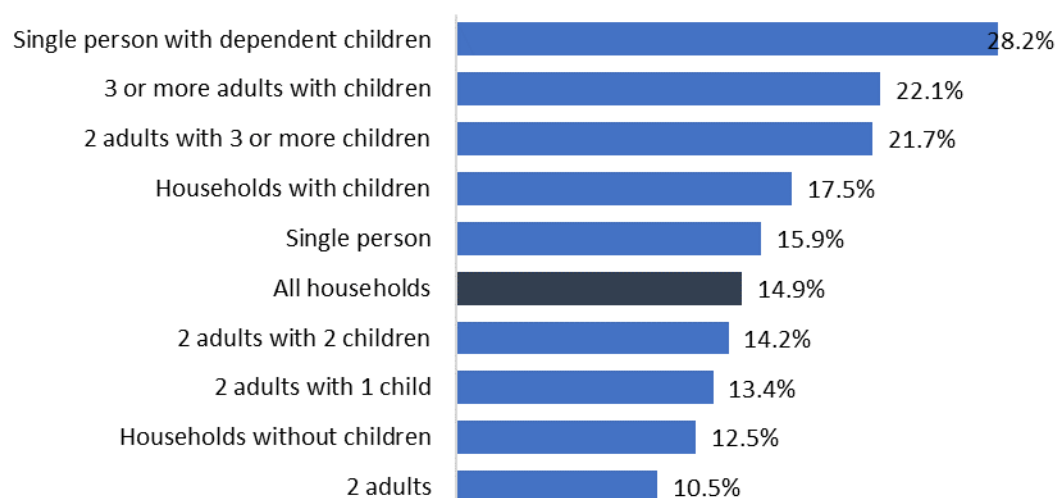
Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

Furthermore, children in Greece face a differentiated risk of poverty or social exclusion depending on the type of household in which they live. Rates are particularly high for individuals living in single-parent households with dependent children, with 51% at risk of poverty or social exclusion based on the latest figures, compared with 36.3% for single-person households and 22.3% for households with two adults and a dependent child. Also, the rate is high amongst larger households (having more members) with dependent children. Almost 37% of households with two adults and three or more dependent children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, while the risk rate is 29.2% for those living in households with three or more adults with dependent children (Figure 2.2).

The household type dimension is also associated with the indicator of severe material and social deprivation with 28.2% of single-parent households being affected by the latter. Rates of severe material and social deprivation are significantly lower when household members are fewer or when there are no dependent children in the household (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.2: Risk of poverty or social exclusion (%) by household type, 2020

Source : Eurostat (EU-SILC).

Figure 2.3: Severe material and social deprivation (%) by household type, 2020

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

2.3 Specific categories of children in need

This section addresses issues such as the identification, the definition and the profile of the specific categories of vulnerable children (target groups) as proposed by the ECG, i.e., (a) homeless or severely deprived children in relation to housing, (b) children with disabilities, (c) children with mental health problems, (d) children with an immigrant / refugee background and Roma children, (e) children in institutional care and, (f) children in "precarious family situations".

2.3.1 HOMELESS CHILDREN OR SEVERELY DEPRIVED CHILDREN IN RELATION TO HOUSING

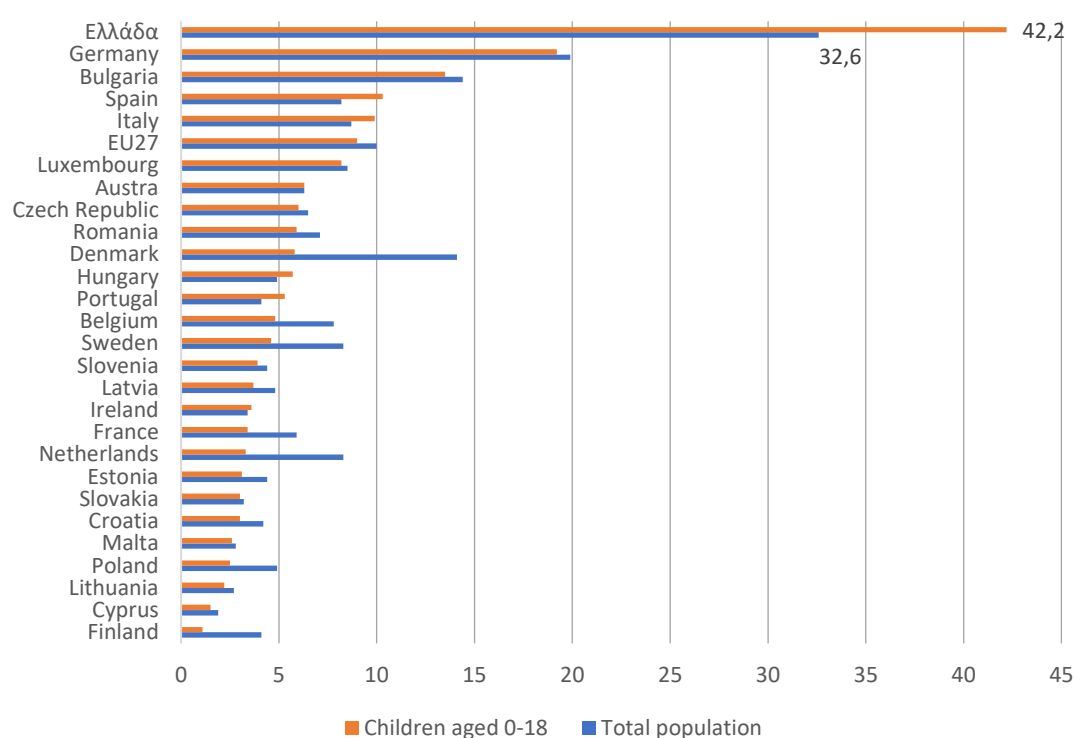
Homeless children are those living on the street, in abandoned buildings or in public open spaces (such as parks) either alone or accompanied by other people. This category also includes homeless unaccompanied immigrant or refugee children. Homeless children are at high risk of falling victim to various forms of violence and exploitation while also being deprived of basic material, emotional and psychological support and care.

In Greece, there is insufficient data on the number of homeless people in general and homeless children in particular. In May 2018, a pilot attempt was made by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to register homeless people in 7 (seven) Municipalities of the country, (Athens, Thessaloniki, Heraklion, Piraeus, Ioannina, Trikala and Nea Ionia), where 1,645 homeless people were identified, 24.2% of whom were young people up to the age of 29. According to the latest available statistics of E.K.K.A., there are 2,079 unaccompanied children currently in Greece, living in various structures. However, there are no official statistics on the number of unaccompanied children in homelessness across the country. It is interesting to note the considerable number of requests for accommodation from unaccompanied minors in precarious living conditions. The National Emergency Response Mechanism for unaccompanied minors in precarious living conditions put in place a hotline in April 2021 and started housing unaccompanied minors in June of the same year. As of February 2022, it had received 2,552 calls, covering 1,957 different cases of unaccompanied minors, of which 1,901 were for housing, 44 for legal aid, and 12 for other issues. The main conclusion from the above is that there is no sufficient and reliable information on the number and characteristics of homeless children in Greece. Also, the causes behind child homelessness are not known, nor has the impact of the ten-year crisis on the rates and risk of homelessness in minors been investigated (UNICEF, 2021).

In addition to children with complete homelessness, there are children who face severe housing problems or deprivations. There are also children who are at increased risk of being homeless due to the inability of their parents or guardians to meet various financial obligations or due to other adverse conditions. The EU-SILC survey includes several useful indicators that reflect the housing conditions of children and adults as well as the economic hardship faced by households across the EU in terms of living costs. Important indicators are: the indicator for the housing cost overburden rate, the housing deprivation rate index, the severe housing deprivation rate index, but also several additional indicators regarding the inability to meet various needs and financial obligations of households.

The housing cost overburden rate is defined by Eurostat as the percentage of the population living in households where housing costs cover more than 40% of the household's disposable income, excluding any housing allowances. According to this indicator, Greece records the worst performance among European countries both in terms of the percentage of children living in households facing an excessive burden of housing costs, as well as the total population (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 : Housing cost overburden (%), 2020



Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

Available data by age group and income status show that children living in poorer households and younger children (0-6 years) are in a rather unfavorable position.

The EU-SILC survey also includes a number of indicators presenting aspects of housing deprivation related to 6 key features or deficiencies of the residence such as the presence of humidity or the lack of a bathroom or indoor toilet, as well as an additional indicator of the lack of sufficient space in the residence. The percentage of the population that lives in houses with lack of space, while at the same time experiencing at least one more deficiency in terms of the 6 basic characteristics of the house is considered to be in a state of severe housing deprivation.

Table 2.1: Housing cost overburden (%), by age group and poverty status, 2020

Total					
	0-6 years	6-11 years	12-17 years	less than 18 years	Total
Greece	52.7	41.5	35.3	42.2	32.6
EU27	9.8	9.0	8.3	9.0	10.0
Below 60% of the medial equivalized household income					
	0-6 years	6-11 years	12-17 years	less than 18 years	Total
Greece	81.7	88.0	82.0	84.0	82.5
EU-27	34.1	33.2	28.5	31.7	38.4

	<i>Above 60% of median equivalized household income</i>				
	0-6 years	6-11 years	12-17 years	less than 18 years	Total
Greece	46.6	29.0	20.3	30.8	21.9
EU-27	4.2	3.5	2.9	3.5	4.2

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

According to available statistics, fewer children in Greece live in dwellings with severe material deprivation compared to the EU average. However, there are more significant problems with the lack of space, and as a result the rate of severe housing deprivation is higher than the European average based on the EU-SILC data. All the problems related to the quality of housing are stronger in households with incomes below 60% of the median disposable income, as well as in single-parent households and in large households with children, such as households with 3 or more children.

The problem of the inability of adequate home heating for households with children in Greece, especially for poor and single-parent households, as well as for large households with dependent children, is very serious. The very high rates of overdue debts regarding liabilities that include rent and utility bills reflect the financial hardship of households in Greece that disproportionately burdens poor households with children, single-parent and large families.

2.3.2 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

According to the content of the European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the years 2021-2030 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006, the definition of disability should be broad and include people with long-term disabilities physical, mental, intellectual or sensory difficulties that face obstacles in terms of their full and equitable participation in society.

Internationally, children with disabilities are a particularly vulnerable group of children. Children with disabilities face multiple and serious challenges. These include the lower average level of their physical or mental health, the various difficulties that arise in the context of their daily lives but also the lack of equal opportunities or even their exclusion in critical areas for their future socio-economic prospects, such as pre-school education and care. Moreover, children with disabilities often face various aspects of social discrimination and prejudice but also an increased risk of abuse by other people (both peers and adults) in their closer and wider circle.

Table 2.2: Selected indices of housing deprivation by household type and poverty status, 2020.

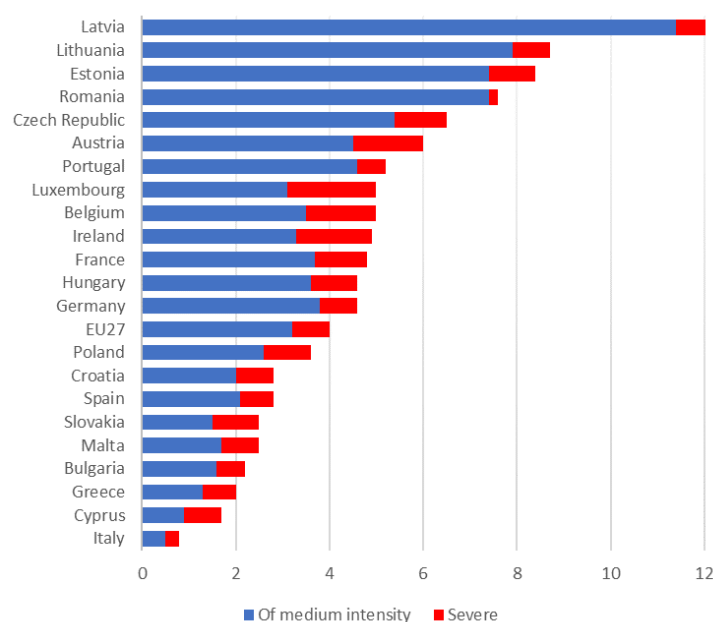
	Total		Below 60% of median equivalized household income		Above 60% of median equivalized household income	
	Greece	EU27	Greece	EU27	Greece	EU27
Housing deprivation indices (%):						
Children less than 18 years old living in residences:						
<i>(a) with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundations or mould around the windows or on the floor</i>	12.4	15.5	18.3	23.3	10.8	13.6
<i>(b) without an indoor bath or shower</i>	0.2	1.8				
<i>(c) without an indoor flushing toilet that is being used exclusively by household members</i>	0.4	2.0	1.6	6.4	0.1	1.0
<i>(d) that are considered too dark</i>	5.5	6.3	7.6	9.9	4.9	5.3
<i>(e) without a bath, shower or indoor flushing toilet that is being used exclusively by household members</i>	0.2	1.7	0.6	5.8	0.0	0.8
<i>(f) that cannot afford the replacement of worn-out furniture</i>	46.0	28.9	58.0	54.3	43.5	23.0
Children residing in residences with lack of space (%)	45.6	25.9	64.4	41.7	40.5	22.1
Severe housing deprivation rate (%):						
<i>Children less than 18 years old</i>	8.9	6.0	18.1	14.0	6.3	4.2
<i>households with 1 adult and children</i>	12.8	6.2				
<i>households with 2 adults and 1 child</i>	3.9	2.7				
<i>households with 2 adults and 2 children</i>	5.9	3.3				
<i>households with 2 adults and 3 or more children</i>	11.5	9.4				
<i>households with 3 or more adults and dependent children</i>	12.3	10				
Households with children that cannot keep their homes adequately warm (%):						
<i>total/ all households with children less than 18 years old</i>	16.2	7.9	38.9	20.4	10.4	5.2
<i>households with 1 adult and children</i>	24.5	13.6	42.5	22.9	18.3	9.1
<i>households with 2 adults and 1 child</i>	12.7	6.4	35.9	21.0	8.8	4.4
<i>households with 2 adults and 2 children</i>	11.3	5.6	28.8	16.8	7.7	3.7
<i>households with 2 adults and 3 or more children</i>	15.1	9.8	36.3	23.6	7.2	5.1
<i>households with 3 or more adults and dependent children</i>	24.5	9.5	51.2	19.7	16.7	7.0
Households with children facing payment arrears (rent, utility bills) (%):						
<i>total/ all households with children less than 18 years old</i>	32.7	6.5	52.6	13.4	29.1	5.2
<i>households with 1 adults and children</i>	62.4	15.6	73.2	24.7	58.7	11.3
<i>households with 2 adults and 1 child</i>	35.4	7.9	71.1	22.5	29.6	5.9
<i>households with 2 adults and 2 children</i>	38.9	8.1	58.6	18.3	34.9	6.5
<i>households with 2 adults and 3 or more children</i>	42.5	13.9	60.3	29.0	35.8	8.7
<i>households with 3 or more adults and dependent children</i>	44.4	14.6	67.2	29.1	33.7	11.0

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC). Note 1: The data refer to the Household Living Conditions Survey for 2020 (reference year 2019), except for the index of inability to replace worn-out furniture reported in 2015. Note 2: The index of severe housing deprivation includes the percentage of the population that lives in households with a lack of space while experiencing at least one of the 6 housing deprivation dimensions (a-f).

In Greece there is a lack of data and statistics for children with disabilities. First, no systematic registration of these children takes place at the administrative level, except to the extent that these children meet the criteria to become eligible for disability benefits. It is also particularly difficult to quantify the dimensions of child disability on the one hand and child poverty on the other, on the basis of administrative data, as receiving disability benefits in Greece does not depend on income but on medical criteria such as the degree of disability and the diagnosis of specific diseases. The lack of these data also leads to the inability to record and quantitatively assess the individual problems experienced by children with disabilities, including problems accessing services by sector as described in the ECG documents.

At the European level, the available household surveys (EU-SILC, Health Survey-EHIS) focus on people aged 15 or 16, so it is not possible to measure the percentage of children with disabilities on an annual basis. However, the EU-SILC survey for 2017 was accompanied by an ad hoc questionnaire on the health and well-being of children under 16 years of age. According to these figures it is estimated that 2% of all children aged 0-15 in the country experience moderate to severe or severely limitations with respect to their activities due to health problems, compared with the 4% in the EU on average (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Children (ages 0-15, %) with activity limitations due to health problems, 2017.



Source: Eurostat.

Also, the National Health Survey for 2019 included a special, pilot questionnaire that aimed at capturing the health status of children aged 2-14 years (in a sample of 8,125 households and 1,334 children). This survey indicates that 6.7% of children aged 2 to 14, according to what their parents / guardians report, have a chronic problem or chronic condition³. The percentage of children who have restricted their activities due to health reasons for 6 months or more was found to be at levels similar to that of the EU-SILC, i.e., close to 2% (2.2%).

Furthermore, according to the analysis of the standard Health Survey microdata, 2% of children aged 15-17 surveyed reported experiencing limitations in their activities due to health problems. As according to the population census for 2011, individuals aged 0-19 years amount to about 2,077,224, and given the small variation in the results of the above surveys, it is estimated that about 40,000 children in Greece face activity limitations due to health problems. Children with disabilities living in institutions do not participate in these surveys, but the number of these children is very small according to official figures. A more important limitation of this approach is that the concept of activity limitations as reflected in these

³ The term Chronic refers to a health problem or condition that lasts or is going to last more than 6 months, with or without medication.

surveys is not necessarily identical with a broader definition of disability, which may include additional dimensions, limitations and obstacles.

Table 2.3: Children (%) with activity limitations due to health problems, 2017, 2019.

	EU-SILC	National Health Survey (pilot)	National Health Survey (standard)
Age group	0-15	2-14	15-17
Share of children with activity limitations due to health problems	2.0	2.2	1.97
<i>limitations of medium intensity</i>	0.7	0.5	-
<i>severe limitations</i>	1.3	1.7	-
Share of children with at least 1 functional limitation (from the ones below):	-	-	8.22
<i>difficulty seeing even with glasses/ contact lenses</i>	-	-	2.91
<i>difficulty hearing in a room with some noise</i>	-	-	0.62
<i>difficulty climbing or going down 12 stair steps</i>	-	-	1.84
<i>difficulty walking for 0.5 km without an aid</i>	-	-	2.71
<i>difficulty in remembering things or concentrating</i>	-	-	2.59

Sources: Eurostat (EU-SILC), ELSTAT (National Health Survey - EHIS). Note: Weighted microdata analysis (National Health Survey).

In terms of administrative sources, according to the latest available data from the Greek Organisation of Welfare Benefits and Social Solidarity (former Agricultural Insurance Organisation | OGA) (OPEKA), 18,607 children under the age of 18 were entitled to disability benefits in Greece in December 2021. According to the National Confederation of Disabled People, students with disabilities or special educational needs attending general and special primary and secondary education in Greece amounted to 109,020 during the school year 2019-2020. At this point it should be clarified that on the one hand an (unknown) percentage of children with disabilities are excluded from participation in education, and on the other hand the concept of special educational needs is much broader compared to the concept of restrictions on activities discussed above.

Table 2.4: Sources for determining the number of children with disabilities in Greece.

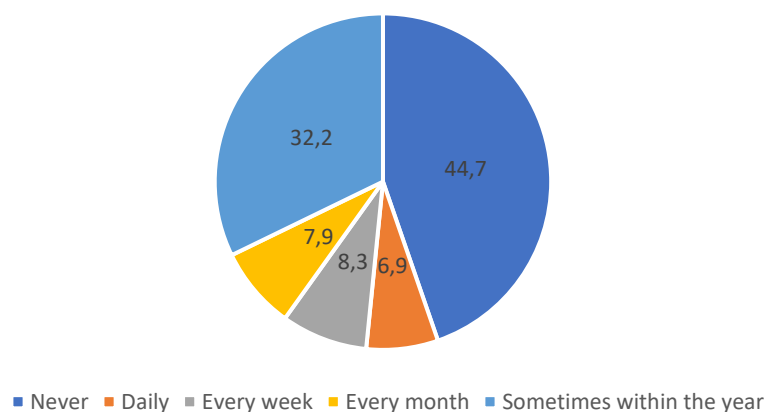
	Number of children	Source
Children with activity limitations due to health problems	≈ 2% of the population aged 0-18 (approximately 40,000 children)	EU-SILC, National Health Survey
Children who are beneficiaries of disability benefits	18,607	OPEKA
Students with disability or special educational needs	109,020	ESAMEA
Children with disability in institutions	130	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, EKKA

Sources: Eurostat, ELSTAT, OPEKA, ESAMEA, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs/ EKKA.

2.3.3 CHILDREN WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Similar to children with disabilities, it is difficult to find adequate and reliable statistics on children with mental health issues in Greece, both at administrative level and on the basis of existing surveys. There are also problems arising from the lack of consistent definitions.

Figure 2.6: Frequency of stress/ irritability/ restlessness. Percentage distribution of children (aged 2-14), 2019.



Source: ELSTAT (National Health Survey, Health of children 2-14 years old).

Annual surveys such as the National Health Survey target people over the age of 15, while the EU-SILC special survey (ad hoc module) on child health and health conducted in 2017 does not include questions about the mental health status of children surveyed. However, the 2019 National Health Survey's special questionnaire on child health included some questions about the mental health of children aged 2-14. According to these data, 0.2% of children of this age group suffer from depression, 2.5% have difficulty remembering things, 3% face difficulties in controlling their behavior while 15.2% of children exhibit stress, irritability or restlessness at least once a week (Figure 2.6).

Table 2.5: Estimated number of children (ages 0-14) with mental health problems, 2019.

	Total number of children aged 0-14	% of children
Total number of children aged 0-14	1,527,519	
With depression (estimates)	3,074	0.2%
With stress/ irritability/ restlessness at least once per week (estimates)	233,635	15.2%

Source: ELSTAT (calculations based on the National Health Survey and the Estimated Population per Age Group in 2019).

Moreover, the National Health Survey provides some information on a series of variables that reflect symptoms of poor mental health in adolescents aged 15-17 years, even if the sample is relatively small due to the limited range of the specific age group in the context of the study (156 individuals in 2019 and 120 in 2014). These data show that adolescents aged 15-17 years report a much lower degree of symptoms of poor mental health compared to adults in Greece.

A percentage of 7.1% of adolescents versus 29.5% of adults reported at least 1 symptom of poor mental health for several days in the last two weeks in 2019 (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Adolescents (ages 15-17, %) with symptoms of bad mental health in the last 15 days, 2014 and 2019.

	2019		2014	
	Children aged 5-17 (%)	Adults (%)	Children aged 5-17 (%)	Adults (%)
With at least one of the following symptoms for several days in the last 2 weeks:	7.1	29.5	16.6	37.2
<i>Little interest or pleasure for various activities in the last 2 weeks.</i>	2.3	10.6	1.3	15.8
<i>Bad mood, feeling depressed or helpless in the last 2 weeks.</i>	3.1	12.4	3.6	16.1
<i>Difficulty in sleeping or wakes up while sleeping or sleeps excessively in the last 2 weeks.</i>	1.4	14.7	4.6	20.0
<i>Tired or lacking energy in the last 2 weeks.</i>	4.8	20.1	10.4	24.0
<i>Lack of appetite or eating too much in the last 2 weeks.</i>	4.3	6.5	5.3	9.7
<i>Feeling bad about themselves or feeling like a failure or that he/she has let his/her family down in the last 2 weeks.</i>	2.3	5.0	2.7	10.0
<i>Difficulty concentrating e.g. while reading or watching TV in the last 2 weeks.</i>	2.1	6.3	3.8	8.7
<i>Slow speech or movement to an extent that it is becoming apparent to other people or hyperactivity in the last 2 weeks</i>	1.8	3.7	1.4	6.6

Source: EL. STAT (National Health Survey- EHIS). Note: Weighted microdata analysis.

The most common symptoms among adolescents appear to be bad mood, fatigue or lack of energy as well as irregular eating (lack of appetite or overeating). Regarding the gender dimension, girls are more likely to report symptoms of poor mental health (the most common symptom seems to be related to irregular eating), with the exception of the “inability to concentrate” variable where boys perform worse than girls (Table 2.7). Finally, based on the data, there seems to be a significant improvement in terms of these indicators compared to 2014, both among adolescents and adults.

Table 2.7: Percentage of adolescents (ages 15-17) with symptoms of bad mental health during the last 15 days by gender, 2014 and 2019.

	2019		2014	
	Percentage of boys	Percentage of girls	Percentage of boys	Percentage of girls
With at least one of the following symptoms for several days in the last 2 weeks:	8.7	5.7	11.7	21.0
<i>Little interest or pleasure for various activities in the last 2 weeks.</i>	1.3	3.1	0.0	2.5
<i>Bad mood, feeling depressed or helpless in the last 2 weeks.</i>	1.3	4.5	3.4	3.9
<i>Difficulty in sleeping or wakes up while sleeping or sleeps excessively in the last 2 weeks.</i>	0.0	2.5	1.4	7.5
<i>Tired or lacking energy in the last 2 weeks.</i>	3.7	5.7	8.9	11.7
<i>Lack of appetite or eating too much in the last 2 weeks.</i>	2.5	5.7	3.4	7.0
<i>Feeling bad about themselves or feeling like a failure or that he/she has let his/her family down in the last 2 weeks.</i>	1.3	3.1	2.8	2.5
<i>Difficulty concentrating e.g. while reading or watching TV in the last 2 weeks.</i>	4.0	0.6	1.4	5.9
<i>Slow speech or movement to an extent that it is becoming apparent to other people or hyperactivity in the last 2 weeks.</i>	1.0	2.5	1.4	1.4

Source: ELSTAT (National Health Survey- EHIS). Note: Weighted microdata analysis.

2.3.4 CHILDREN WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND, REFUGEE CHILDREN AND ROMA CHILDREN

According to ELSTAT's estimates for the country's population in 2020⁴, around 94% of children aged 0-19 were born in Greece and the remaining 6% in other countries (or 130,488 children). Also, 87.4% of children up to 19 years old have Greek citizenship and 12.6% are foreign citizens (Table 3.8). In addition, it is estimated that 44,500 refugee and migrant children were in Greece in September 2020 (UNICEF). According to the latest official statistics (E.K.K.A.), unaccompanied children in Greece living in various structures are 2,079 (data as of 1st March 2022).

There is no official number for the total Roma population in Greece in general, and for Roma children in particular. In 2017, Greece conducted a mapping of Roma housing types and concluded that there are 354 living areas in which 104,210 Roma reside. The Council of Europe estimates the Roma population in Greece at 175,000 people, while according to older unofficial estimates, their total population could range between 110,000 and 300,000 individuals. Since, according to data on the country's estimated population in 2020, children up to the age of 19 represent about 19% of the total, the population of Roma children could be close to 20,000-35,000 children. However, this is a rather conservative estimate, as it is based on the lower (but more reliable) limits of estimates on the total Roma population in the

⁴ The 2021 National Population Census process and results are pending. The previous Census had been carried out in 2011.

country, but also because it is believed that the ratio of children in Roma communities is higher than the ratio of children in the general population.

Table 2.8: Estimated number of children aged 0-19 by country of birth and citizenship, 2020.

	Number	Percentage
Born in Greece	1,946,736	93.7
Born in another country	130,488	6.3
With Greek citizenship	1,816,130	87.4
With another citizenship	261,094	12.6
Total number of children aged 0-19	2,077,224	100.0

Source: ELSTAT.

2.3.5 CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE AND ACCOMMODATION

This category includes children in child protection and care facilities and some of the unaccompanied children and children for adoption living in accommodation centers.

Children who are in child protection and care units, either public or private, as well as children who are to be placed to a foster parent by court decision or by order of a prosecutor or to be adopted, are obligatorily registered in the National Register of Minors maintained by the National Center Social Solidarity (EKKA) in accordance with the provisions of law 4538/2018. Currently, the Registry includes 1,505 children living in a total of 95 child protection facilities. Of these, 130 children are disabled while the corresponding structures in which they live are 9.

Table 2.9: Number of children in alternative / institutional care, 2021

	Number of children
In child protection institutions	1,505
Unaccompanied in various structures	2,079

Sources: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, EKKA.

Moreover, 2,079 unaccompanied children are currently in Greece (E.K.K.A. figures on 1 March 2022) living in accommodation structures (1,626), in assisted living apartments (283), in relocation structures (11), in emergency accommodation structures (78), Reception and Identification Centers (73) and in open accommodation centers (19). Seventy-seven (77) unaccompanied children living in 10 accommodation structures have been placed under the National Fostering and Adoption System, with the aim of increasing this number as part of the country's efforts for the deinstitutionalization of children.

2.3.6 CHILDREN IN PRECARIOUS FAMILY SITUATIONS

Children living in a household of low labor intensity

According to Eurostat data, 12% of children under the age of 18 in Greece in 2019 lived in low-labor-intensive households (defined as households with working-age members who worked

20% or less compared to their full-time working capacity previous year), with the corresponding figure in the EU being 8.2%. Also, 7.8% of children in Greece lived in households where no member was of working age compared to 9% in the EU27.

Children living with an adult with disabilities/ mental illness/ long-term illness/ substance abuse

In the absence of administrative data, Table 2.10 presents estimates on the percentage of households in Greece where children up to 14 years of age live with at least one adult with physical or mental health problems, such as limitation in activities due to health problems, existence of long-term illness, diagnosed depression or general symptoms, poor psychological condition or daily consumption of alcohol and tobacco. The survey from which the following estimates are derived (National Health Survey) does not contain a variable on substance/drug abuse.

Table 2.10: Living with an adult with physical and mental health problems (percentage of households with children aged 0-13 years), 2019.

	Households (%) with children aged 0-13
Living with an adult with activity limitations due to health problems	23.3
Living with an adult with a long-term illness	4.1
Living with an adult suffering from depression	0.8
Living with an adult having bad mental health symptoms several days per week	21.1
Living with an adult consuming alcohol on a daily basis for the past 12 months	2.9

Source: ELSTAT (National Health Survey- EHIS). Note: Weighted microdata analysis.

Children victims of domestic violence

According to the aggregate statistics of the national helpline for children (SOS- 1056) there have been 1,123 reports of serious child abuse incidents in Greece in 2020. Most of them (92.4%) were anonymous reports, while regarding the victim-abuser relationship, the abusers were the parents in 33.4% of the incidents and another relative in 5% of the incidents⁵.

Children of underage mothers/ underage mothers

According to ELSTAT data, 2,347 children were born to mothers up to 20 years old in Greece in 2020, with 113 babies born to girls under the age of 15 (Table 2.11). Also, according to Eurostat data, 1,320 underage girls became first-time mothers in Greece in 2019, with 55 being under the age of 15.

⁵ Also, during the first 10 months of 2021, about 300 cases of domestic violence were recorded per month, with 7 out of 10 cases involving women who are being abused by their current or ex-husband or partner in their home. It is not known how many of these incidents concern households with children.

Table 2.11: Number of births per maternal age group, 1980-2020.

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
<15	187	67	47	108	113
15-19	18,446	7,299	3,036	3,069	2,234
<20	18,633	7,366	3,083	3,177	2,347
20-50+	129,501	94,863	100,191	111,589	82,420
Total	148,134	102,229	103,274	114,766	84,767

Source: ELSTAT.

Children with imprisoned parents

Children of imprisoned parents experience a variety of difficulties such as social stigma, feelings of abandonment, parental quarrels and increased divorce rates, as well as an increased risk of poverty resulting from the loss of the imprisoned parent's income. According to the Council of Europe Recommendation on the Rights of the Children of Imprisoned Parents in 2018, there were an estimated 1.2 million children in Europe whose parents were serving sentences in detention facilities. According to estimates of the pan-European network "Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE)" in Greece there are about 14,000 children with a father in prison and about 650 children with a mother in prison. However, the network (as well as the Council of Europe) estimates for all European countries are methodologically based on an earlier survey conducted in France (Champsaur et al., 2002) which concluded that each detainee corresponds to an average condition 1.3 children.

According to the latest statistics from the Ministry of Justice, there are approximately 11,000 detainees in detention facilities across the country. Based on the ratio of children per prisoner, the children of imprisoned parents are estimated at around 13,200 which is quite close to the above estimates. However, the characteristics of the penitentiary population may vary greatly from country to country, and thus, the proportion of children per prisoner also varies.

2.4 Barriers in accessing services

EU Recommendation 2021/1004 establishing the ECG aims to prevent and combat the social exclusion of vulnerable children, by ensuring quality and free access to a set of key services that play a central role in ensuring the effective well-being of children. These services include (a) pre-school education and care, (b) education, (c) healthcare, (d) nutrition and, (e) housing.

2.4.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Early childhood education and care in Greece is distinguished into non-compulsory pre-school care (PSC), (for kids aged 0-3), and compulsory pre-school education (PSE) (for kids aged 4-6). Preschool education and care is considered very important in the direction of promoting the participation of women in the labor market but also in terms of promoting gender equality in

general, an area in which Greece records the lower performance in the EU⁶. Preschool education and care is also considered to be particularly important for the psychosocial development of children, with the quality factor playing a central role in this direction.

In Greece, non-compulsory pre-school care is provided by public and private structures such as nurseries and daycare centers under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor (private structures) and Municipalities (public structures). While it is not possible to accurately assess unmet needs in terms of access to pre-school care services at the national level, Greece has a lower rate of children aged 0-3 years enrolled in formal pre-school care facilities compared to the European average (32,4% versus 34.5%) based on the EU-SILC survey, but mainly fewer hours of formal preschool care per child per week (5.6 hours / week compared to 10.1 hours / week in the EU).

Table 2.12: Percentage of children 0-3 years old receiving formal preschool care by duration (hours / week), 2020.

	0 HOURS	1-29 hours	at least 30 hours
Greece	67.7	12.8	19.5
EU27	79.5	11.2	9.3

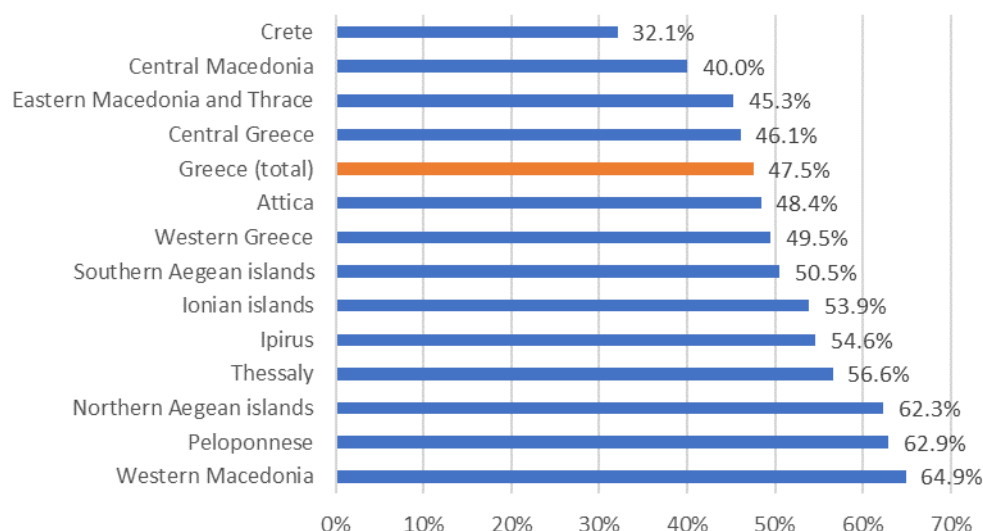
Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

According to ELSTAT data, about half of children under the age of 3 in Greece (47.5% or 154,371 children) do not receive formal pre-school care with percentages varying widely by Region (Figure 2.7). Also, according to the results of the special (ad hoc) survey conducted by ELSTAT for the Reconciliation of Family Life and Work in 2018, children up to 14 years in Greece are cared for mostly by their parents. For children up to 3 years old, the results of the EU-SILC survey for 2019 show that 40.9% of children in this age group receive care exclusively from parents compared to 47.1% in the EU.

To meet their needs that can not be served otherwise, families with young children in Greece also resort to informal forms of care for preschool children such as help from extended family members (e.g., grandparents or other relatives) or from friends or the employment of domestic staff that often combines childcare with household chores. The problem with these arrangements is that this type of care can add financial burden to the already heavily burdened Greek households and be temporary and inadequate to the extent that caregivers do not have the appropriate skills, thus endangering the quality of pre-school care children receive.

⁶ According to the European Gender Equality Index (Gender Equality Index of EIGE), Greece is last in the ranking among the 27 EU countries with only 52.2 points out of 100 in total (Sweden has the highest performance with 83.8 points).

Figure 2.7: Percentage of children 0-3 years old who do not receive formal preschool care by Region, 2020



Source: ELSTAT.

The relatively low intensity (in terms of hours / week) participation of children 0-3 in formal structures but also the low percentage of women with children under 6 years who participate in the labor market in Greece (56% compared to 64% for women in the EU and 90% for men with children of the same age in both Greece and the EU), indicate the existence of access problems. The latter can be related to the cost of services, the limited number of available slots, transportation costs but also the limited timetable of the structures that act as a barrier for full-time working mothers (UNICEF, 2021).

The UNICEF Deep Dive study highlighted very specific barriers to accessing preschool services related to direct and indirect financial costs as well as additional, non-financial factors. The financial accessibility of public structures is jeopardized by the non-central planning of the fees system in municipal structures, while indirect costs are associated with inadequacies and gaps in the provision of meals to children participating in the structures. Also, there are significant differences in terms of available services and slots per Municipality while the infrastructure often does not meet the special needs of the most vulnerable children such as children with disabilities. The latter also face the financial barrier of covering the cost of employment of the "special assistant" for children "with physical, mental or mental disabilities" at the stations, which may lead to their exclusion from these services. Roma children or children with a migrant or refugee background face additional bureaucratic obstacles related to the documents required for their registration, while obstacles were also identified regarding the transportation costs (not covered by Municipalities) and the limited opening hours of structures that act restrictively or even prohibitively on the equal participation of women in the labor market.

2.4.2 EDUCATION AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Compulsory education in Greece concerns children aged 4-16. It includes kindergarten for children 4-5 years old (education of 4-year-old children has become mandatory from 2018-2019), elementary school for children aged 6-12 years (primary education) and high school for children 13-16 years (first stage of secondary education). The second stage of secondary education (high school) is optional and can be of either general or vocational nature (vocational training).

Participation in compulsory education is high in Greece, at 98.5% for primary education and 96.7% for secondary education. Dropout rates are low in primary school and senior high school (about 1%) with the school dropout rate being higher in the first year of high school than in the last. School dropout rates are much higher in vocational training structures. Although there is insufficient data on the socio-economic background of school leavers, the dropout is likely to be associated with the (low) family income. It is indicative that dropout is more common amongst pupils in public schools than pupils in private schools.

An important barrier in the field of education in Greece for the entire population concerns the private expenditure of households for educational support of students outside school (tutoring, private lessons) but also for learning foreign languages. Especially the first type of expenditure is associated with inequalities in the educational and professional prospects of students, while at the same time acting as a disincentive to substantially improve the services provided by the public education system.

The geographical dimension of access barriers is also important. Geographical disparities regarding school dropout may include the dimension of differences in terms of physical access resulting from geographical proximity or distance from schools, but other socio-economic dimensions are also of interest. A 2019 study conducted by the Institute for Educational Policy of the Ministry of Education, for example, concludes that in the period 2014-2017 the dropout rate of high school students in West Attica (where Roma families have a large concentration) was the highest in the country at 11, 6% versus 4.6% for the country as a whole.

According to a survey by the European Organization for Fundamental Rights, Greece had the lowest participation rate of Roma children in compulsory education among nine countries at 69% compared to the average of 90%. Factors such as discrimination, child marriage and poverty are considered to be the main obstacles to the equal participation of Roma children in education, although in recent years there has been an increase in their participation rate (UNICEF, 2021).

Other groups of vulnerable children, such as children with a migrant background (especially unaccompanied children) and children with disabilities, also face barriers to accessing education. According to data from UNICEF Greece for the school year 2019-2020, the majority of children with an immigrant or refugee background aged 4-17 remain out of school (13,000 children or 42% were enrolled according to estimates of the number of children of this age who located in Greece). Children living in institutional facilities and reception centers on the islands had the lowest enrollment rates, with enrollment and actual participation rates varying widely.

Children with disabilities and special educational needs face a variety of access problems such as lack of specialized teaching staff, transportation problems, physical accessibility and lack of basic infrastructure and material required to meet their educational needs. According to data included in the 10th Statistical Information Bulletin "Data on the education of students with disabilities and / or special educational needs" published by the Disability Observatory of the National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece students with disabilities and / or special educational needs attending general and special primary and secondary education, amount to 101,683 students, constituting 7% of the student population of the country. However, the number of children with disabilities who are completely excluded from access to education in Greece is not known.

Last but not least, children living in institutions face barriers to participation in education due to student gaps or increased educational needs and difficulties. As a result, children living in institutions are more likely to attend special schools, which contributes to their general social segregation.

2.4.3 HEALTHCARE

According to the special questionnaire for the health of children of the National Health Survey for 2019 (ELSTAT), 98.1% of children aged 2-14 in Greece have very good or good health, 1.4% moderate health and 0.5% poor or very poor health. A similar picture is obtained from the results of the ad hoc questionnaire of EU-SILC of 2017 with 98% of children up to 16 years old declaring very good or good health, 1.2% moderate health and 0.8% poor or very bad health.

Table 2.13: Self-assessed / self-reported health status of children in Greece (2017, 2019).

	Very good/ good	Fair	Bad/ very bad	Ages
EU-SILC 2017	98.1%	1.4%	0.5%	under 16
National Health Survey 2019	98.0%	1.2%	0.8%	2 to 14

Sources: Eurostat (EU-SILC), ELSTAT (National Health Survey, Health of children 2-14 years old)

The percentage of children who report unmet needs for medical care in Greece based on the 2017 EU-SILC survey (2.4%) is higher than the European average (1.6%). In the same year, the deviation from the European average in terms of children's unmet dental needs was even greater (4.4% compared to 2.6% in the EU27). There are also large inequalities based on household income, with the share of poorest children reporting unmet medical needs being at least double in size compared to the share of children from more advantaged households (Table 2.14). Large income inequalities are also observed in access to dental care (Table 2.15).

Table 2.14: Percentage of unmet needs for medical care (children under 16), 2017

Income category/ poverty risk	Greece	EU27
Below 60% of median disposable income	4.5	3.0
Above 60% of median disposable income	1.9	1.3
Total	2.4	1.6

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

Table 2.15: Percentage of unmet needs for dental care (children under 16), 2017

Income category/ poverty risk	Greece	EU27
Below 60% of median disposable income	6,0	7,8
Above 60% of median disposable income	4,0	1,3
Total	4,4	2,6

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

The main reason behind unmet medical needs amongst children is the cost of services (77.7%) other, unspecified reasons (at a rate of 8.9%), distance (7.2%), waiting times (5.2%) and lack of time at the individual level (1%). In terms of dental care, financial cost reaches 98.2% as the main cause of unmet needs, while the distance accounts for only 1.8% (Table 2.16).

Table 2.16: Reasons for unmet medical and dental care needs (% , children up to 16 years old), 2017

	Cost	Distance	Lack of time	Waiting list	Other reasons
Medical care	77.7	7.2	1	5.2	8.9
Dental care	98.2	1.8	0	0	0

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

The financial burden of households in Greece for covering their healthcare needs is reflected in the very high level of private health expenditure, which exceeded 40% of the total health financing in 2019 (according to data from the Eurostat Health Accounts System). The most worrying element is how more than 35% of total health expenditure (or about 87% of private health expenditure) consists of direct, private and non-reimbursed household payments (out-of-pocket payments). The prevalence of these payments in the financing of a health system means that households are not adequately protected against the risk of unexpected medical expenses, while in the event that they can not be covered for financial reasons, the health of household members may be put at risk.

Vulnerable groups of children face significant barriers to accessing health services. Given the income inequalities in access to health services in Greece but also the prevalence of out-of-pocket payments, children living in poor households are considered particularly vulnerable in terms of access to medical, pharmaceutical and dental care. The Deep Dive study identified shortages of specialized mental health services for children as well as rehabilitation centers for children with disabilities which show significant variation by prefecture. Also, staff shortages in certain geographical areas can have disproportionate negative effects on poor children or Roma children living in rural areas.

Families of children with disabilities face additional financial burdens related to the coverage of treatments and services from the family budget but also problems of waiting times, bureaucratic barriers and physical access to health services in general. Children with an immigrant or refugee background face cultural, linguistic and bureaucratic barriers that make it difficult for them to access health services in a timely manner. Roma children mainly face obstacles regarding insufficient information about their rights, incidents of discrimination and

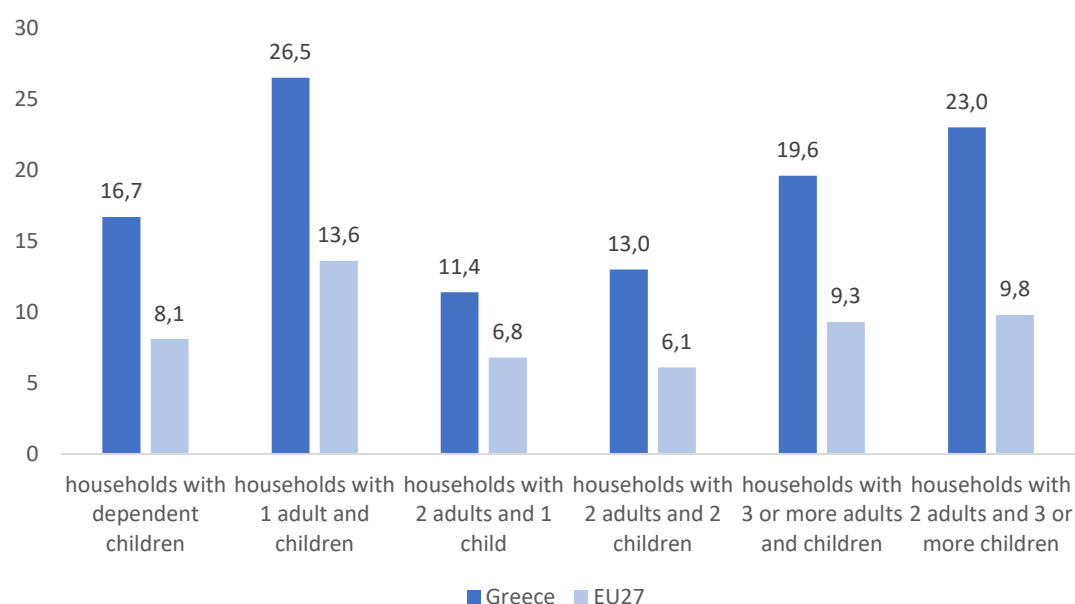
the lack of official documents that identify them in order to be able to access and receive health services.

2.4.4 HEALTHY NUTRITION

The healthy nutrition of children starts from infancy with breastfeeding and extends to childhood and adolescence with the adequate intake of nutrients playing a very important role in terms of child physical and mental development and health.

Despite the recommendations of the World Health Organization for exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months of life of infants, breastfeeding rates in Greece are exceptionally low. According to a study conducted by the Institute of Child Health (Iliodromiti et al., 2018) the percentage of infants who breastfed within the first 24 hours of life was 66%, decreased to 51% by the end of the first week while reaching the first month continued to exclusively breastfeed only 40% of infants. With the completion of 4 months the percentage dropped to 25% and almost zeroed (0.8%) at the end of the first month of life. In addition, according to ELSTAT data from the National Health Survey of 2019, only 36.6% of young mothers breastfed for 6 months or more.

Figure 2.8: Financial inability to secure a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every other day, 2020



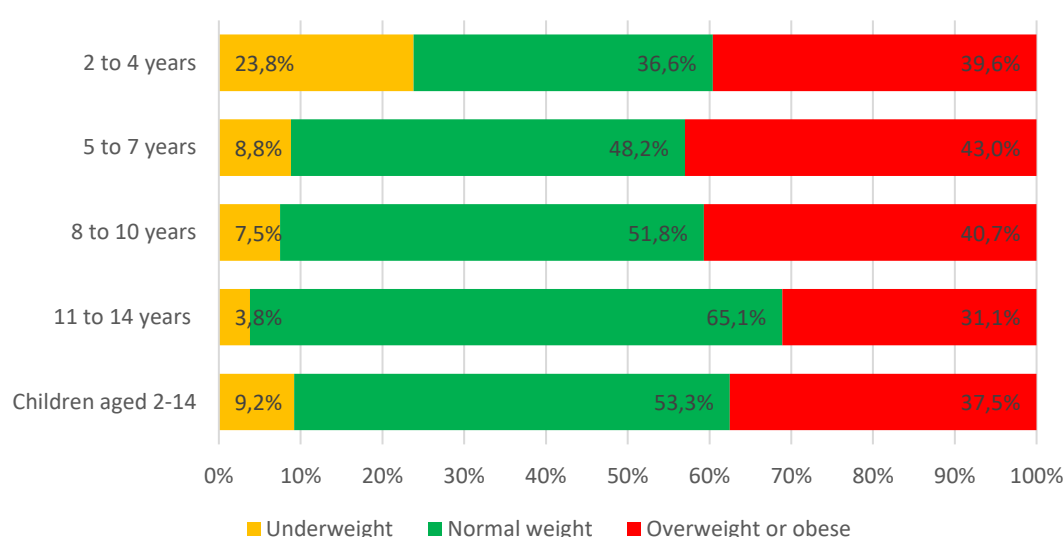
Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

In Greece, households with children face greater financial difficulties in following an adequate diet (a meal with meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent) compared to households in other European countries. Single-parent and large households seem to face particularly large difficulties (Figure 2.8). In poorer households with dependent children (with a family income below 60% of median income) the rate of not being able to secure such a meal every two days reaches 54.1% compared to 20.7% in Europe. Also, from an analysis of the National Health

Survey microdata for 2019, it appears that only half (49.1%) of the adolescents aged 15-17 consume at least a portion of fruit or vegetables per day in Greece.

Body weight is a tool for assessing children's dietary patterns, although it can be influenced by genetic endowments or other factors. According to the results of the thematic questionnaire of the National Health Survey 2019 for the health of children aged 2-14 years and using as a tool the differentiated for the body Mass Index (BMI), in all children aged 2 to 14 years in Greece, 9.2% are underweight, 53.3% are normal weight and 37.5% are overweight or obese. The majority of underweight (23.8%) children are recorded at the ages of 2 to 4 years, while most are overweight or obese (43%) at the ages of 5 to 7 years (Figure 2.9). Moreover, in Greece the percentage of low birth weight babies is over 9% compared to the 6.6% for the average of OECD countries (OECD, Family Database).

Figure 2.9: Percentage distribution of children aged 2-14 years by BMI category, 2019



Source: ELSTAT (National Health Survey, Health of children 2-14 years old)

The extensive analysis conducted as part of the Deep Dive study highlighted general barriers including household income inadequacy and financial hardship, poor eating habits and the lack of a comprehensive dietary policy, information sources and general health support for the nutrition of children and families in Greece. Currently, there is no comprehensive and coherent information on barriers to children's access to healthy eating per target group but in general, the barriers identified in the study concern the existence of fragmented or inadequately designed programs that do not meet the needs of the most vulnerable or that do not guarantee national coverage (such as Social Grocery stores). The biggest weakness identified are the programs for the provision of healthy food inside and outside schools that can exclude the most vulnerable groups of children (Roma, refugees, migrants, homeless) since access to them depends on whether the parents have access to the relevant information or meet the eligibility criteria. Also, as many of the vulnerable children do not attend school, the selective implementation of the school meals program in specific schools in urban areas may exclude children from poor socio-economic backgrounds or those living in rural or remote areas.

2.4.5 ADEQUATE HOUSING

In Greece, barriers to accessing adequate housing per target group are not always measurable. In addition to the obvious problems for homeless children, children living in poorer, single-parent households or households with 3 or more children are more vulnerable to the risk of severe housing deprivation according to available statistics presented in the previous section. The most important dimension of this risk is the lack of sufficient space in the residence with about half of children in Greece being affected by it, while the corresponding percentage for the poorest children reaches the 65%. There are also other important dimensions that are not part of the Eurostat index of severe home deprivation, but are measured in the EU-SILC survey, such as the inability of a large share of households with children in Greece to adequately heat their homes or the general economic difficulties faced by households with children and which increase both the risk of housing deprivation and the risk of potential homelessness.

Other categories of children who face barriers to accessing adequate housing include Roma children, children in institutional care and unaccompanied children. According to data presented in the Deep Dive study and which are based on an earlier European Union survey on minorities and discrimination, the Roma population in Greece suffers a large percentage from severe housing deprivation such as overcrowding, lack of running water (in 9%) or toilet inside the house (29%). It is also estimated that a significant number of Roma children are homeless, even if this number cannot be accurately estimated (UNICEF, 2021). Also, according to the data included in the Operational Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2017-2021, a significant share of the Roma population lives in makeshift shelters, with or without access to the electricity and water networks and lack in basic infrastructure.

In addition, children in child protection and care units are considered particularly vulnerable in terms of access to adequate housing, as well as the 2,230 unaccompanied children currently confirmed in Greece and living in various structures. Regarding the former, the Greek Government has intensified and accelerated the efforts to deinstitutionalize them in order to ensure a better standard of living. As for the unaccompanied children, despite the coordinated efforts to improve their living conditions, many of them still live in structures with deficiencies and it is not known how many of them live in unsuitable housing or are homeless.

Table 2.17: Deprivation indicators related to housing (Roma and general population), 2016

	Roma population	General population
Mean number of rooms per person in the households	0.5	1.2
Households (%) without an indoor tap water	9.0%	MΔ
Households (%) living in homes without an indoor toilet and indoor shower or bathroom	29.0%	0.1%
Households (%) that live in: homes with a leaky roof, damp walls, floors or foundations or mould in the window/door panes or on the floor	37.0%	12.3%
Households (%) that live in homes considered as too dark	18.0%	5.5%

Source: UNICEF, 2021 (from: EU-SILC, 2014 & FRA, European Union Second Survey on Minorities and Discrimination (EU-MIDIS II) 112 Roma, 2016).

3. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE TARGETS

3.1 Introduction⁷

The main objective of the European Child Guarantee (ECG) is to guarantee the access of any child at risk of poverty or social exclusion to key services, such as education, healthcare, nutrition and housing. The implementation of policies and measures put in place to this effect is monitored via appropriate quantitative and qualitative targets. This NAP has adopted the option of setting also milestones by 2025, in addition to the ten-year targets (by 2030).

The NAP targets mainly consist in reducing child poverty and social exclusion, as well as increasing the share of children in need who gain access to key services. In addition to the quantitative targets, the NAP also includes qualitative targets, mainly related to the improvement of the services provided. Milestones are also set, corresponding to the implementation of key planned actions and signaling the gradual achievement of the targets. This section presents below the proposed quantitative and qualitative targets for the NAP, along with the corresponding milestones, by area of intervention.

It is reminded that at the European level, in accordance with the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights, it has been decided to reduce, by 2030, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million, i.e. to reduce the rate of people at risk of poverty or exclusion (AROPE) from 21.1% in 2019 to 17.6% or by 3.5 percentage points. One third (1/3) of the total (5 million individuals) must be children. In this context, the European Commission has made proposals on the national targets to be set by member states, also pointing out that those who are far from the EU benchmark (such as Greece) must make greater efforts.

Therefore, the main indicator that will be used to monitor the progress of targets both for the general population and for children is the AROPE rate. It is a composite indicator including the share of population living under the poverty line or/and in conditions of material deprivation or/and in households with low work intensity. The data on AROPE rate in the NAP are based on the new definition of the indicator (code ilc_peps01n of Eurostat) which has been developed in the context of the objectives of the 2030 European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

As far as the NAP is concerned, setting targets based on existing indicators promotes the relevance between the national and the broader policy monitoring and evaluation framework, as well as the harmonization between the national monitoring frameworks at the European level. However, in the context of the NAP, additional national objectives related to the elimination of specific access barriers, which are particularly important for Greece, are being examined at the same time.

The quantitative targets and indicators of the NAP aim mainly at reducing child poverty and increasing the share of children in need who have access to basic services. The quantitative targets for the target years 2025 and 2030 must be ambitious, in order to draw on all the margins that exist in reducing child poverty. At the same time, it must be ensured that the

⁷ In the final drafting of chapter 3, comments and suggestions from executives of EKKA, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and UNICEF have been taken into account.

objectives remain achievable. The right balance between ambition and achievement of goals is necessary for the goals to fulfill their main purpose - to sufficiently mobilize decision makers, as well as all stakeholders. Based on this approach, the following quantitative targets have been set with the aim of being ambitious, taking into account (depending on the availability of data) historical trends and the deviation from the EU average or of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average, so that the objectives remain achievable.

In addition to the quantitative targets, the NAP also includes qualitative targets that mainly concern the improvement of the services provided. Moreover, milestones are described, which signal the gradual achievement of goals and help in the timely detection of possible delays. The following are the proposed quantitative and qualitative targets for the NAP, together with the corresponding milestones, by intervention sector.

3.2 Targets for income adequacy of children in need and for wider interventions in target groups

The progress of quantitative targets for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion is monitored through the examination of five indicators (Table 3.1), which are included or have been proposed to be included in European or national monitoring frameworks. In particular, it is proposed as a target that the percentage of children (aged 0-17) at risk of poverty or social exclusion should not exceed 24.2% in 2030, from 30.8% in 2020 and 37.7% in 2015⁸. The target has been set with the prospect of converging to the European Union average, based on the latest available value of the index (24.2% in 2020). The target can be considered ambitious (decrease by 6.6 percentage points), but also achievable, as in the previous five years a decrease of 6.2 percentage points was already recorded, as a result of the introduction of social protection policies (such as the minimum guaranteed income), but also due to broader socio-economic developments (such as the reduction of unemployment), which are expected to continue to have a positive impact in the current decade⁹.

It is necessary to set goals in individual components of the index, as well as in dimensions of poverty that are not limited to the number of children in need. More specifically, it is proposed to limit the percentage of children at risk of poverty (monitored by the AROP index and determined solely on the basis of income) to be reduced to 18.5% by 2030, with a median target of 20% in 2025, from 20.9 % in 2020 and 26.6% in 2015, compared to 19.5% in the EU. For this reason, it is proposed to set a target for reducing the child poverty gap to 22% in 2030 (from 28.7% in 2020 and 34.5% in 2015).

⁸ It is a complex indicator that includes the percentage of the population that is below the poverty line, and / or in conditions of material deprivation, and / or in households with low labor intensity. The data for the AROPE index in this section are based on the new definition of the index (code ilc_peps01n of Eurostat) that has been developed in the framework of the objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan for 2030.

⁹ In the long-term forecasts of the European Commission, in the context of examining the sustainability of pension systems, the unemployment rate among people aged 20-64 in Greece is expected to decrease to 12.1% in 2030, from 17.5% in 2019 (Economic and Financial Affairs, The 2021 Ageing Report: Economic and Budgetary Projections for the EU Member States (2019-2070), Institutional Paper 148, May 2021).

Table 3.1: Quantitative targets for reducing child poverty

Indicator	Historic value (year)	Current situation (year)	EU value (2020)	2025 target	2030 target
Share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) ^{1, 4}	37.7 (2015)	30.8 (2020)	24.2 (2020)	<28 ³	<24.2 ³
Share of children at risk of poverty (AROP) ¹	26.6 (2015)	20.9 (2020)	19.5 (2020)	<20 ³	<18.5 ³
Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap for children ¹	34.5 (2015)	28.7 (2020)	24.1 (Ευρωζώνη. 2019)	<25 ³	<22 ³
Share of children with severe material and social deprivation ¹	23.9 (2015)	19.0 (2020)	8.1 (2020)	<15 ³	<8.1 ³
Share of Roma children <18 years at risk of poverty ²	-	99 (2016)	-	<90	<80
Share of children in households with low work intensity	10.6 (2015)	7.7 (2020)	7.2 (2020)	<7.5	<7.2

Sources: 1 Eurostat, EU SILC (9/3/2022). 2 National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma (2021-2030). 3 For confirmation by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. 4 Based on the new index definition (ilc_peps01n).

In addition, in the dimension of social exclusion, a target is proposed for the combined access to the basic services of the ECG. In particular, the target is for the percentage of children experiencing severe material and social deprivation to fall to 8.1% in 2030, from 19.0% in 2020 and 23.9% in 2015, compared to an average of 8.1% in the EU in 2020. A target is also proposed in the dimension of reducing the percentage of children in households with very low labor intensity (below 7.2% in 2030, from 7.7% in 2020). Finally, in order to ensure coherence with the broader policy framework, a target is set to reduce the proportion of Roma children at risk of poverty from 99% to below 80%, based on the National Strategy and Action Plan for Roma Social Inclusion (2021 -2030).

The establishment of institutions that improve the livelihoods of specific target groups, without necessarily aiming at improving access to a specific basic service, will also make a significant contribution to reducing child poverty. In this context, the following quality goals and milestones are promoted:

- Creation of a tool for recording the special needs of children hosted in shelters - victims of domestic violence
- Establishment of integrated local action plans for tackling child poverty
- Targeted actions for the participation of disadvantaged groups in sports, culture and active social life without exclusions in Crete and Thessaly
- Innovative cultural activities for excluded population groups
- Support for adolescents in disadvantaged areas (community participation enhancement actions, vocational guidance actions, support for the family environment)
- Development of interventions to support Roma infants, school children and adolescents in experiential workshops and children's camps

3.3 Targets for access to pre-school education and care

Regarding access to pre-school education and care, it is proposed to include three indicators in the quantitative targets (Table 3.2). In particular, it is proposed that a target on the percentage of children under 3 years of age receiving formal pre-school education and care should be set at 48% (from 31.65 in 2019) while for access to the same service the target for the percentage of children from the age of 3 until the age of compulsory education should exceed 96%, (from 95.7% in 2019) which is a European target set by the strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training.

A special aim is set for Roma children, for whom the attendance of formal pre-school education is at a lower level. In particular, in line with the National Strategy and Action Plan for Roma Social Inclusion, the goal is for at least 75% of Roma children over the age of 3 to participate in formal pre-school education and care.

Table 3.2: Quantitative targets for access to pre-school education and care

Indicator	Most recent value (year)	2025 target	2030 target
Share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion that receive formal early childhood education and care (ECEC) below 3 years old	31.65 (2019)		48%
Share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion that receive formal early childhood education and care (ECEC) aged from 3 years up to the compulsory schooling age ¹	95.7 (2019)	>96	>96 ²
Share of Roma children above 3 years old in formal early education and care (ECEC) ³	69 (2016)	>72	>75 ³

Sources: 1 Eurostat, EU SILC. 2 Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training with a view to the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). 3 National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma (2021-2030).

Qualitative goals for access to pre-school education and care include:

- Increase of early care slots for infants and toddlers from 2 months to 2.5 years, in order to increase the capacity of the preschool care system and further enhance the access of children in need to this service. A milestone is the creation of 50 thousand new places for children by 2024.
- Implementation of the "Kypseli" program, in order to enhance the quality of pre-school education through the development and implementation of a unified and universal educational program in order to ensure the cognitive development of infants and toddlers, in accordance with the EU Council Recommendation, May 14, 2019 ("High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems").
- Implementation of a pilot program of early intervention for children with disabilities, with a milestone of covering 1,450 children by 2025.

3.4 Targets for access to education and school activities

Regarding access to compulsory and high school education, the reduced participation and lower school performance by children belonging to target groups remains a significant

challenge (Table 3.3). Regarding inequalities in learning performance, it is proposed to set targets for enhancing the learning performance of students of low socio-economic status. In particular, the objectives include the increase of the percentage of high-achieving students, the reduction of the percentage of low-achieving students and the increase of the average grade of this category of students, based on the OECD PISA program.

Special care is required to ensure the participation of children who are refugees - immigrants or Roma in education. In particular, it is proposed to aim for the percentage of Roma children aged 5-17 who are members of households and are enrolled in education to reach at least 75% in 2030 (from 69% in 2016). Also, in line with the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of the Roma, the target is the percentage of people who felt discriminated against because they are Roma when they were at school to fall below 15%, from 20% in 2016. Finally, for refugee-immigrant children, the goal is for all children in this category (from 42% in 2020) to be enrolled in formal education.

The proposed quality goals and milestones include:

- Provide USB internet connections for students in remote areas with the aim of reducing the digital divide with the milestone of completion in 2023.
- Establishment of a professional development program before taking up service in matters of educational methodology and inclusive education for future teachers in secondary education
- Training of general and special education teachers, special education staff and special support staff and education executives.
- Training of teachers who have been hired in school units attended by children of immigrants, refugees, Roma, VSG/EKO (vulnerable social groups) students
- Further development of accessible educational material for general and special education

Table 3.3: Quantitative targets for access to education and school activities

Indicator	Most recent available value (year)	2025 target	2030 target
Share of students in the lowermost quintile of the PISA composite indicator of socioeconomic status (ESCS) in Greece and which record performance within the first quintile of students from all countries	19.5 (2018) ¹	>30	>46.6 ²
Share of 15-year-old students with a low socioeconomic status who record a low performance (fail to achieve the PISA level 2) in reading, mathematics and science	19.9 (2018) ¹	<17	<15 ³
PISA score for 15-year-old students with a low socioeconomic status	-	-	>525.6 ²
Share of Roma children of compulsory schooling age who are enrolled in education, household members, 5-17 years	69 (2016)	>72	>75 ⁴
Share of individuals who felt discrimination due to their Roma background in the last 5 years, while in school as a parent or student, respondents aged 16+	20 (2016)	<18	<15 ⁴
Share of Roma children from the age of 4 years to compulsory schooling age that are enrolled in preschool education, household members	28 (2016)	>31	>35 ⁴
Share of immigrant and refugee children enrolled in formal education	42 (2020)	100	100 ²

Sources: 1 OECD PISA. 2 UNICEF Country Program Documents. 3 Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training with a view to the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). 4 National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma (2021-2030).

3.5 Targets for access to housing

In the housing sector, it is proposed to set four quantitative targets. In particular, it is proposed to aim to reduce the rate of housing cost overburden for children at risk of poverty to a maximum of 70% in 2030, from 84.0% in 2020 and 93.2% in 2015 (compared to 31.7 % in 2020 in the EU). Respectively, it is proposed that the rate of severe housing deprivation for children at risk of poverty fall to 14% in 2030, from 18.1% in 2020 (compared to 14.0% in the EU). Especially for Roma children, the goal is to reduce the percentage of people living in deprivation regarding housing conditions to less than 28%, from 37% in 2016. Finally, institutional care is essentially abolished, as the goal is to zero the number of children living in institutional care by 2025 (Table 3.4).

The main goal of the National Action Plan is to strengthen the supply of structures and housing for housing children in need. In this context, the following quality objectives and milestones are proposed:

- The development of semi-autonomous living structures for adolescents (200 adolescents by the 4th quarter of 2024), extending the action to the whole country until 2027
- The development of hostels for immediate reception and short stay of children for adoption, in all regions of the country
- The reform of the institutional framework for the establishment and operation of child protection units, within 2022
- The development of a monitoring system for the implementation of conditions for the establishment and operation of child protection and care units.
- The institutionalization of a framework of specifications for the operation of accommodation structures for unaccompanied minors, within 2022.
- The placement of all children with disabilities with a rate higher than 67% or serious mental illness in professional foster care (concerns 160 children)

Table 3.4: Quantitative targets for access to housing

Indicator	Historic value (year)	Current situation (year)	EU value	2025 target	2030 target
Housing cost overburden rate for children at risk of poverty	93.2 (2015) ¹	84.0 (2020) ¹	31.7 (2020) ¹	<75	<60 ³
Severe housing deprivation rate for children at risk of poverty	13.7 (2015) ¹	18.1 (2020) ¹	14.0 (2019) ¹	<16	<14 ³
Share of Roma individuals who live in housing deprivation conditions (who live in residences which is too dark or with a leaky roof/ damp walls and/or floors, without a shower/bath, without an indoor toilet)	-	37 (2016)	-	<33	<28 ²

Share of children living in institutional care	-	1425 (4/1/2022)	-	0	0 ³
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Sources: 1 Eurostat, EU SILC. 2 National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma (2021-2030). 3 For confirmation by the competent ministries.

3.6 Targets for access to health care

In the area of healthcare, it is proposed to set quantitative targets for reducing unmet medical and dental needs of children at risk of poverty (Table 3.5). In particular, it is proposed to set as a goal the reduction of the percentage of children at risk of poverty with unmet medical and dental needs to 2.0% in 2030 at most, from 4.5% and 6.0% respectively in 2017 (compared to 3.0% and 2.5% on average in the EU).

Regarding the improvement of the quality of access of children in need to health care services, the main aim is to create and enhance stable and mobile health infrastructures. In particular, the following quality objectives and milestones are defined:

- Creation of mobile units for the provision of pediatric, ophthalmological and dental services, for children living in non-urban, remote areas, with the milestone of creating 15 units by 2024 and 30 units by 2027
- Creation of mobile units for the provision of primary health care for unaccompanied minors, within 2022
- Development of Day Centers for the support of minor refugees with mental health problems, with a milestone the operation of 4 centers in Athens and Thessaloniki by 2030.

Table 3.5: Quantitative targets for access to health care

Indicator	Historic value (year)	Current situation (year)	EU value	2025 target	2030 target
Percentage of children at risk of poverty with unmet dental needs	-	6.0 (2017)	2.5 (2017)	4.0	2.0
Percentage of children at risk of poverty with unmet medical needs	-	4.5 (2017)	3.0 (2017)	3.2	2.0

Source of data : Eurostat, EU SILC

3.7 Targets for access to healthy nutrition

In the area of access to healthy eating, it is proposed to set two targets related to obesity, in line with other relevant plans and programs (Table 3.6). In particular, based on the National Action Plan for Public Health and the planned preparation of an Action Plan for the treatment of childhood obesity for "children in need", under the Technical Support Instrument (TSI), the percentage of obese children is provided to fall below 10% by 2030, from 25% in 2017. Respectively, the percentage of overweight or obese children (2 to 14 years old) is projected in the UNICEF national program to fall below 24.5% in 2030, from 37, 5% in 2019. In addition, given the importance of breastfeeding for the later development of children, the goal is to

increase the percentage of young mothers who breastfeed for 6 months or more to at least 50% in 2030, from 36.6% in 2019.

Table 3.6: Quantitative targets for access to healthy nutrition

Indicator	Most recent value (year)	2025 target	2030 target
Percentage of obese children	25 (2017)	<18	<10 ¹
Percentage of overweight or obese children (aged 2-14)	37.5 (2019)	<30	<24,5 ²
Percentage of young mothers that breastfed their babies for 6 months or longer	36.6 (2019) ³	>40	>50 ⁴

Sources: 1 National Public Health Action Plan. 2 UNICEF Country Program Documents. 3 National Health Survey. 4 For confirmation by the competent ministries.

The goals for improving the quality of access to healthy nutrition come from the implementation of relevant programs:

- Prevention of childhood obesity through the implementation of the program "Spyros Doxiadis"
- Promotion of breastfeeding through the program " Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative "
- Promoting a balanced diet in childhood and adolescence through the implementation of actions in schools

4. TARGETED CATEGORIES OF CHILDREN IN NEED

In this chapter, we examine indicative complementary criteria which should be considered in the implementation phase of the measures of the main axes of the NAP in relation to the vulnerable groups of children presented in Chapter 2. These criteria may take into account peculiarities of the geographical structure, social stratification, and economic organization observed in Greece. In the individual groups of children there are geographical, social and economic factors that increase their exposure to the risk of poverty or social exclusion, so there is a need to improve access to basic services. In this chapter, relevant documentation is provided for the selection of the additional criteria for defining vulnerable groups. The selection of appropriate criteria by key axis and / or vulnerable group of children helps to formulate ambitious and achievable goals and to prioritize actions to address barriers to access for these groups of children.

Geographical criteria

A significant number of low-income households as well as children (about 45% of the total child population) live in non-urban, sparsely populated or remote areas, which face the risk of low accessibility to basic services for their residents. For this reason, it is appropriate to take into account geographical criteria while prioritizing the proposed measures of the NAP, especially in axes concerning the access of vulnerable groups of children to services such as those of medical care, education and pre-school care. The relevant needs are highlighted on the one hand through officially published data concerning Greek households with children in sparsely populated or non-urban areas (e.g., low internet access, insufficient coverage of medical care and childcare needs), as the geographical heterogeneity is significantly higher than in other European countries. On the other hand, they are in line with the results of the Field Survey conducted in the context of the NAP, in which geographical distance was reported by the participants as a significant obstacle in achieving the objectives of reducing the risk of social exclusion in many key areas¹⁰.

The distinctive geomorphology of Greece, as is reflected in the large number of inhabited islands (over 200), but also in its mountainous or semi-mountainous continental area (about 80% of the total), make it useful to examine geographical criteria in order to prioritize certain target groups. Studies related to the economic geography in Greece highlight the low accessibility to basic services for the inhabitants of the remote areas, the islands, but also more broadly the sparsely populated areas with a low degree of urbanization (rural areas). Eurostat publishes annual population data by degree of urbanization at the local government level, using three categories, based on density and population criteria, as follows.

- Population in large cities and densely populated areas ("cities, densely populated areas"), i.e., cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants with a density of at least 1,500 people per square kilometer.

¹⁰ For example, Spilanis, Kizos, Kondyli, Misailidis (2005), "Accessibility and attractiveness of the Aegean islands", *Aeichoros* 4(1), Kouvaris (2010), "Access to services: a comparison between island and mainland areas".

- Population in smaller cities or suburbs and moderately densely populated areas ("towns and suburbs, intermediate density areas"), i.e., cities or suburbs with more than 5,000 inhabitants with a density of at least 300 people per square kilometer.
- Population in non-urban or rural and sparsely populated areas ("rural areas, thinly populated areas"), which do not fall into the above two categories.

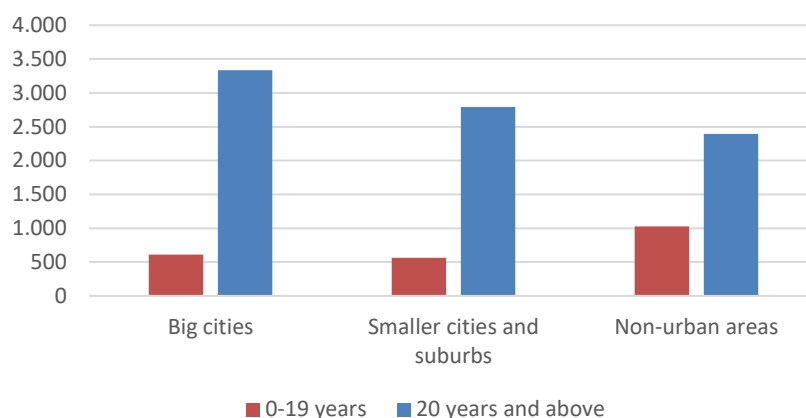
According to this definition, in 2020, about 37% of the total Greek population lived in large cities, about 31% in smaller cities and suburbs and 32% in non-urban areas (Figure 4.1). This distribution changes significantly when one focuses on households with incomes below 60% of median income, of which 40% reside in non-urban areas. The age distribution of the population by degree of urbanization is also interesting, as it appears that approximately 1 million children and young people up to 19 years of age or 47% of the total population of this age range lived in non-urban areas in 2020 (Figure 4.2).

At the same time, GDP per capita at local NUTS3 level shows strong heterogeneity (Figure 4.3). Indicatively, relatively low GDP per capita is recorded in continental geographical areas at the prefecture level which include several sparsely populated areas, such as Xanthi, Evritania, Drama, Serres, Kastoria and Rodopi, but also on islands such as Chios, Ikaria and Samos. The same figure shows the estimated number of children per NUTS3 geographical area. In combination, there is a possibility to define economic criteria, complementary or alternative to the geographical ones, in relation to the prioritization of the implementation of the proposed measures of the national strategy.

Figure 4.1: Population distribution by degree of urbanization and income, 2020 (% of the total of each income category)



Source: Eurostat

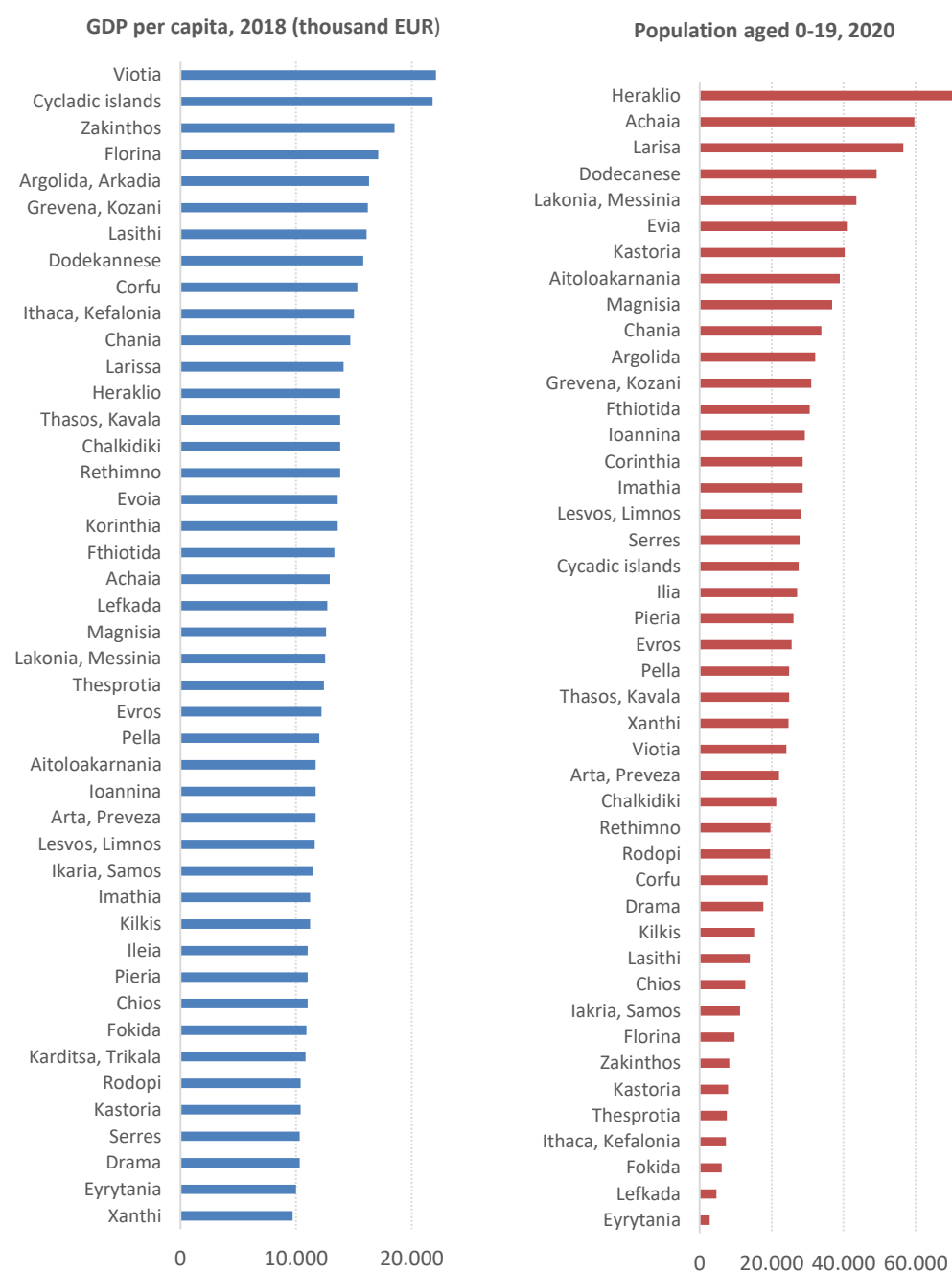
Figure 4.2: Population distribution by degree of urbanization and age, 2020 (in thousands)

Source: Eurostat

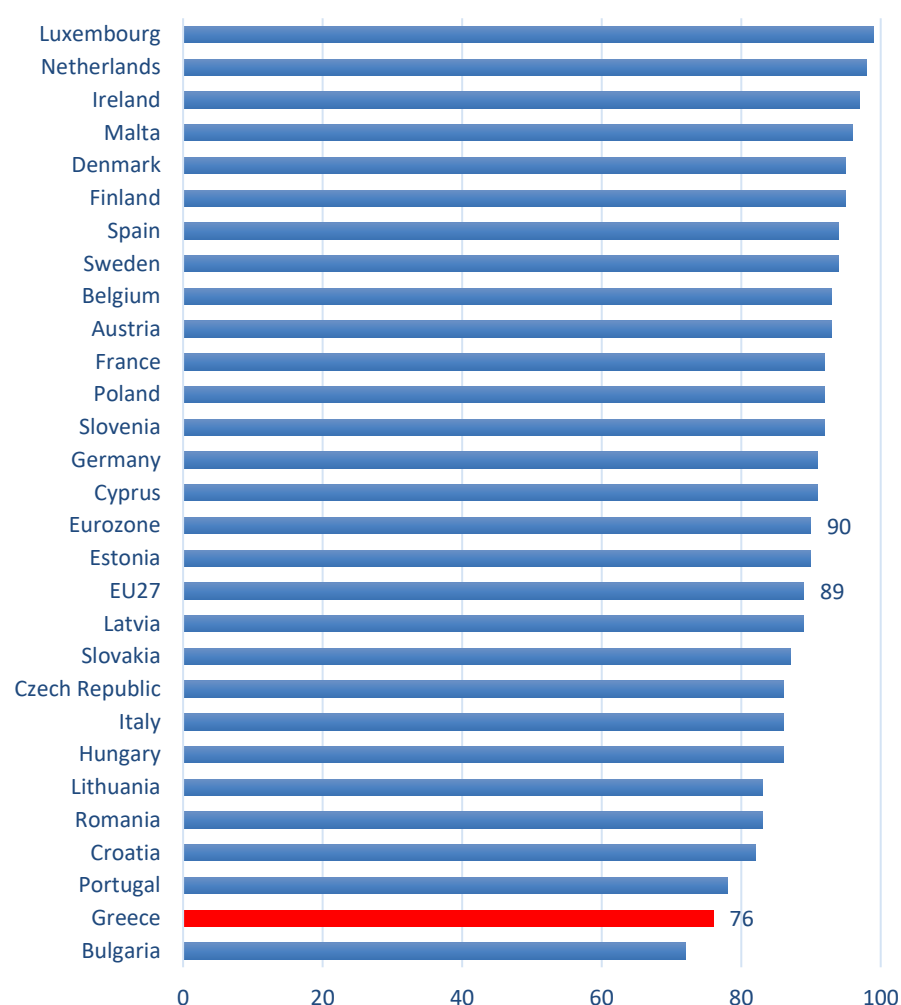
Given these data and the empirical literature on the peculiarity of Greek economic geography, it is considered appropriate while implementing the proposed actions of the national strategy, to give priority to target groups of children based on, inter alia, the geographical criterion of their permanent residence, such as the degree of urbanization, with an emphasis on children living permanently in non-urban areas.

The problem of accessibility to services which are becoming more and more necessary for the new generation, but also of the low penetration of new technologies is particularly intense, both in absolute and relative degree, in the case of Greek sparsely populated areas. For example, recent statistics for 2021 confirm that Greece has one of the lowest internet access rates in Europe for households located in non-urban or sparsely populated areas (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.3: Geographical distribution per capita GDP and child population per NUTS3, 2018



Source: Eurostat

Figure 4.4: Percentage of households (%) with internet access, in non-urban areas, 2021

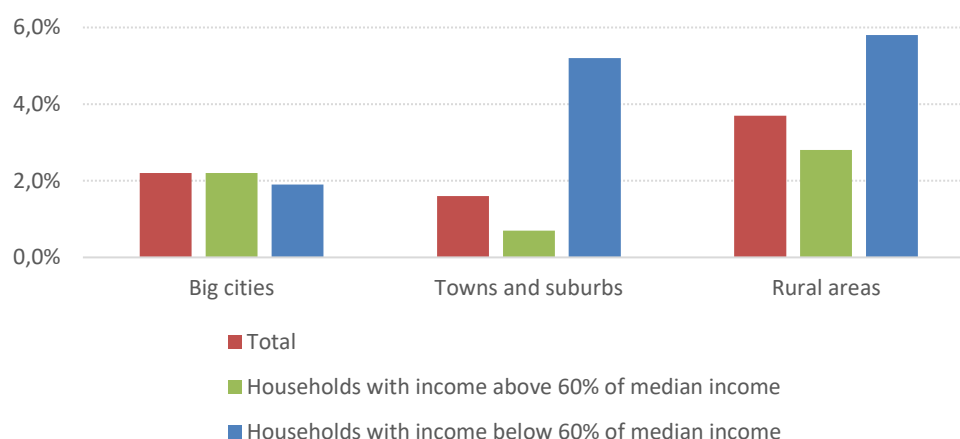
Source: Eurostat

In relation to the goal of improving access to and the quality of childcare services, the problem of insufficient coverage is more pronounced in households located in sparsely populated areas, especially among low-income households (Figure 4.5). At the same time, distance emerges as the main reason for the "gap" to meet this need, at a rate that is the second highest among 12 European countries in which relevant data were collected in 2017 (Figure 4.6).

In relation to the goal of improving the access and quality of childcare services, except from the cases of absence of the relevant need, coverage gaps are also strongly identified in households located in sparsely populated areas. It is noteworthy that in a targeted survey carried out in 2016, these households reported, to a greater extent than their respective households in the EU and their respective households in urban areas, as causes of inadequacy both economic reasons and factors such as the lack of relevant services as well as distance and accessibility difficulties (Figure 4.7).

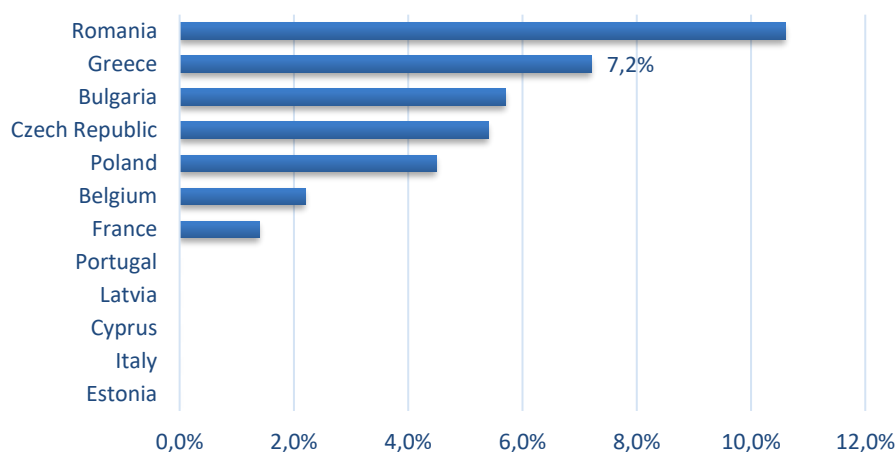
In conclusion, the above findings support the prioritization of actions of the national strategy with criteria that will have geographical characteristics, such as the degree of urbanization of the permanent residence of the beneficiaries.

Figure 4.5: Percentage of households that report insufficient medical coverage for their children, by degree of urbanization and income, 2017 (% of the total of each income category)



Source: EU SILC 2017

Figure 4.6: Percentage of households that cited distance as a major reason for unmet medical care for their children, 2017



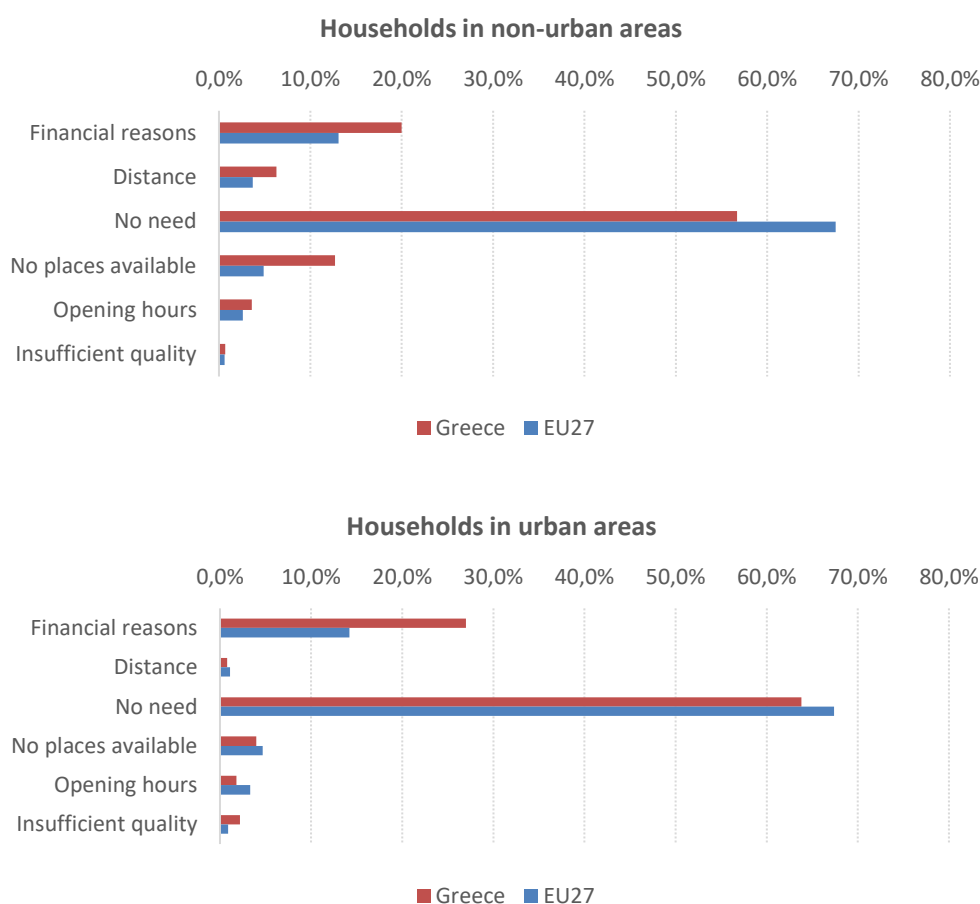
Source: EU SILC 2017

Except from the geographical criteria, it is appropriate to consider other **socio-economic criteria** in order to prioritize the implementation of the measures of the national strategy, which can promote wider social mobility. In this regard, it is useful to consider parameters that seem to be systematically, chronically and intergenerationally linked to the prospects for improving children's living standards. Indicatively, in relation to the household income, it is

confirmed that the share of children living in a low-income environment is significantly lower in households with a high level of education of their parents (Figure 4.8). The role of factors such as the level of education of the parents may, along with the income, contribute to the formation of inequalities in the access of children to specific services, such as a balanced diet, preventive medicine, vaccination, etc.

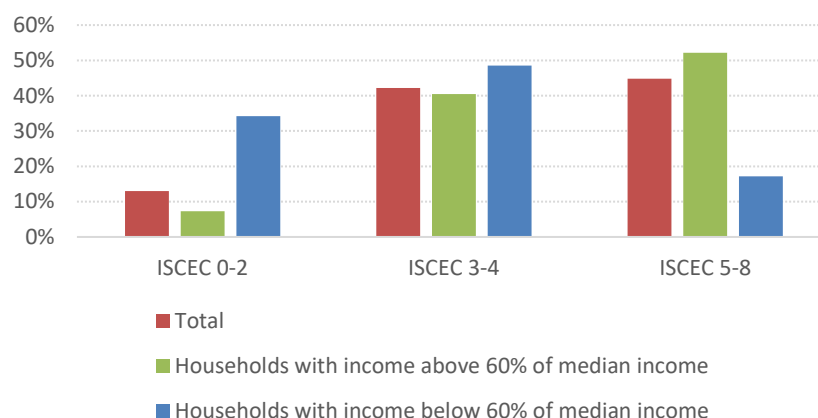
In conclusion, characteristics such as the level of parental education and the broader socioeconomic status (SES, socioeconomic status) seem to be useful factors to consider, in addition to the geographical and net income criteria, in order to assess inequalities in access and use of services for adults and children and to prioritize the implementation of the proposed actions of the national strategy.

Figure 4.7: Distribution of responses: households with children, main reasons for the insufficient coverage of childcare needs, 2016 (% of the total answers)



Source: EU SILC 2016

Figure 4.8: Distribution of children, by income and level of education, 2020 (% of the total of each educational category)



Source: Eurostat

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