EPA SURVEY REPORT

Parents' Views on the European Child Guarantee Card Pilot

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SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This survey was shared with all EPA member organisations to gather their views on the European Child Guarantee (ECG) Card pilot project proposed by the European Commission. The main results are summarised below; an extended version follows in the next pages.

- **Awareness of the ECG is low**. Out of 136 respondents, 77.9% had either never heard of the ECG or did not have a clear understanding of it. This figure clearly shows that greater efforts are needed to raise awareness about this essential part of the EU framework.
- ***A priori* opposition is minimal**. Encouragingly, after being given more information about the ECG and the Card pilot project, only 3.7% of respondents would oppose its creation a priori, while 66.9% would be in favour, signalling strong support for such a measure.
- **Proposed coverage**. When asked about which services the ECG Card should cover, respondents suggested a variety of ideas. Meals, school supplies, and healthcare access were the most frequently mentioned.
- **Main concerns**. Respondents mainly raised the risk of stigmatisation and discrimination, administrative and digital barriers, the risk of misuse or abuse, and data protection.

EPA's recommendations based on these results are set out in the accompanying Policy Recommendations.

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METHODOLOGY

The survey was anonymous. It was distributed to EPA's member organisations, which in turn consulted their respective constituencies. It was available in multiple languages and open for responses from 16 September to 15 October 2026. In total, 136 people from 8 countries took part.

The questionnaire opened with two questions on the respondent's role and country of residence. Respondents were then asked whether they knew what the European Child Guarantee (ECG) is. All respondents were then asked, through open-ended questions, which services the Card should cover, which aspects of the Card concerned them most, and whether they knew of similar initiatives in their community, school, workplace, or other settings, and what had and had not worked. The questionnaire closed with a question on whether respondents agreed with the potential implementation of the Card in their country, to which they could answer "yes", "no", or "maybe", followed by space for additional comments. The full questionnaire is provided in the annex.

As the survey was distributed in several languages, responses were automatically translated into English and, where necessary, lightly edited for clarity and readability. Quotations in this report are taken from these translated responses. Open-ended answers were analysed by grouping recurring themes.

RESULTS BY THEME

Of the 136 respondents, 129 (94.9%) completed the survey as parents, guardians or family caregivers, four (2.9%) as teachers or educators, and three (2.2%) as other. Awareness of the European Child Guarantee (ECG) was low: 65 respondents (47.8%) did not know what it is, 41 (30.1%) had heard of it but were unsure what it is, and only 30 (22.1%) knew it.

1) **What the Card should cover**

School supplies, **food** (including school meals), and **healthcare** were by far the

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services most frequently suggested. Respondents often linked them directly to children's learning, stressing that children cannot learn if they are hungry or unwell and that educational opportunities should not depend on family income. **Clothing**, **sports**, **leisure and cultural activities**, **school trips**, and **school transport** were also widely mentioned as ways of allowing children to take part fully in school life and avoid social exclusion. Smaller groups proposed digital devices and internet access, psychological support, childcare, support for children with disabilities or special educational needs, tutoring and hygiene products, while a few also mentioned housing and energy costs.

Some respondents commented on how the Card should work: it should "provide access to services, not create an additional bureaucratic step", be usable across all EU countries, and rest on a transparent list of entitlements. A few cautioned that it should not duplicate existing national systems, for example where healthcare is already free.

2) **What worries parents most**

Asked what worried them most about the Card, respondents raised four main concerns. A small number said they had no concerns or could not yet form a view.

Discrimination and **stigmatisation** were the most frequently cited concerns. Respondents feared that peers could identify children as poor, for example by presenting a visibly different card at school or in a shop, leading to teasing, bullying, or children not using the Card out of shame. They asked for a neutral appearance, similar to an ordinary bank card, and for discreet use. Some argued that the Card should be open to all children, and a few also feared discrimination against children with disabilities or from migrant backgrounds.

Administrative and digital barriers were equally prominent. Respondents pointed to complex applications, long processing times, strict eligibility rules, language barriers, and digital exclusion, noting that families with limited digital skills, language difficulties, or older devices risk being left behind. They called for automatic and transparent eligibility checks, simple applications in commonly spoken languages, and a non-digital alternative.

Misuse and **abuse** were a significant concern for many respondents. Some feared that goods or benefits might not reach the child, for instance if they were resold or used for other purposes, or if parents asked for cash instead. Others worried about

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fraud, applications by people who are not entitled, or stolen or forged cards. These concerns were often accompanied by proposals for safeguards, such as settling costs directly with schools and service providers.

Data protection, **eligibility**, and **reach** completed the picture. Respondents asked for clear rules on what data are stored and who can access them, and some worried about hacking. Others feared that the Card would not reach those who need it most, or that working parents and families just above the eligibility threshold would be left out, which some contrasted with the case for access for all children.

3) **Lessons from existing initiatives**

Only a minority of respondents described an existing initiative, so the following examples are illustrative. Support provided directly in kind and settled with schools or providers, such as free school meals, subsidised travel passes, and municipal assistance with school supplies, was generally seen as working well. One respondent described a school meals scheme that was used far more by families in financial difficulty once it was opened to everyone, which echoes the concern about stigmatisation.

The most common weakness was administrative burden: applications and proof of eligibility that must be resubmitted every year, or for each trip or club, were said to create “hidden poverty”, as eligible families give up on services altogether, and applying for each benefit individually was described as very stressful for parents. Respondents expect the Card to simplify this process, not add to it.

Despite their concerns, respondents were largely in favour of the Card: 91 (66.9%) agreed with its potential implementation in their country, 40 (29.4%) answered “maybe”, and five (3.7%) answered “no”.

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ABOUT EPA

Founded in 1985 and based in Brussels since 1987, the European Parents' Association (EPA) is the only European umbrella organisation exclusively representing parents, bringing together national and regional parents' associations to represent the voices and interests of families across Europe. As the only pan-European organisation dedicated exclusively to representing parents, EPA unites a diverse network of member organisations representing more than 100 million parents.

Mission. EPA empowers parents as key partners in shaping inclusive and equitable education, fostering home-school collaboration, amplifying their voices at the European level, sharing EU policy insights, connecting members, and working with NGOs and policymakers to promote meaningful change for all learners.

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ANNEX

What follows is the full version of the questionnaire, as shown to respondents.

European Child Guarantee Card - EPA Members' Survey
The aim of this survey is to gather valuable insights, ideas, and experiences on the proposed European Child Guarantee Card project. The European Commission is developing a proposal and is asking for our input. This is our chance to have our say and make sure that the card reflects both our children's and families' needs. *Anonymity & Confidentiality*: Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. All responses will be processed in an aggregated format to help us develop a better proposal for the European Commission. This survey takes approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with us!

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1. **I am completing this survey as a**:
- Parent / guardian / family caregiver
- Teacher / educator
- Other

2. **Country of residence**:
- [drop-down list of all European countries]

3. **As the European Commission notes, the European Child Guarantee is the European Union's main tool to combat child disadvantages. In other words, it is an initiative ensuring children at risk of poverty or social exclusion have access to free healthcare, education, childcare, housing, and adequate nutrition. Do you know what the European Child Guarantee is?**
- Yes
- I have heard about it, but I am not sure what it is
- No

4. **The European Commission has decided to create a Child Guarantee Card whose aim is to make it easier for vulnerable children and families to access the services they are entitled to. We want to help shape this proposal in the best way possible, so we need you to share your input with us. First of all, which services do you think this Card should cover (e.g., school supplies, food, healthcare, etc.)? Please explain.**
- [open-ended answer]

5. **Which aspects worry you the most about the Card (e.g., potential discrimination, digital marginalisation, administrative issues, etc.)? Please explain.**
- [open-ended answer]

6. **Do you have any knowledge or experience of similar initiatives in your community, school, workplace, or other settings? If so, what worked and what did not work?**
- [open-ended answer]

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7. **From what you have learned up to now, do you agree with the potential implementation of this Card in your country?**

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

8. **Would you like to add anything else?**

- [open-ended answer]

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