

2024

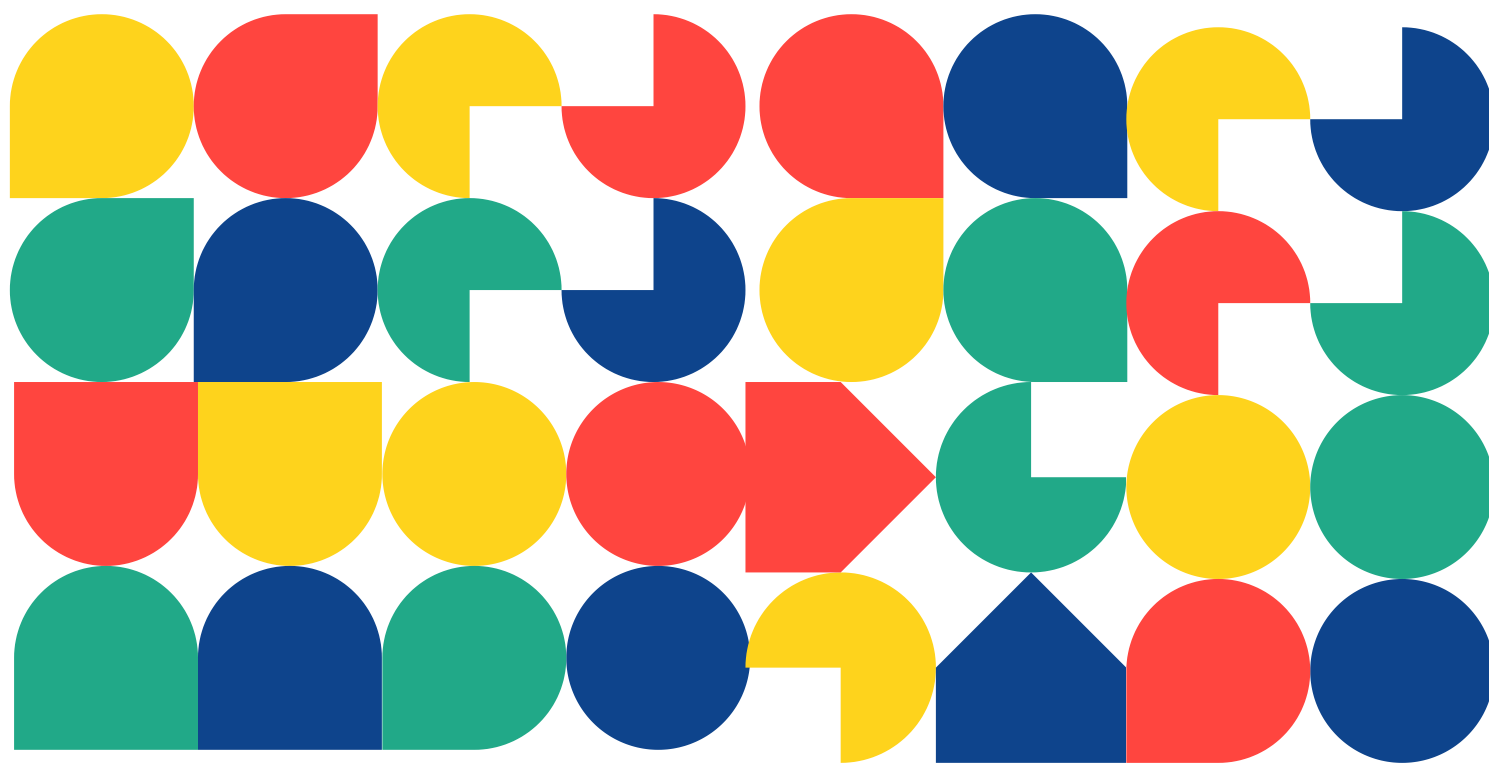


Child Guarantee analysis

LATVIA

Support to children with disabilities within the National Action Plan for the implementation of the EU Child Guarantee

Country Fact Sheets



Date of publication

National Action Plan (2023) [EN](#) / [LV](#)

Overall Opinion

Children with disabilities are clearly identified as 'children in need' and key and comprehensive data are provided. The National Action Plan (NAP) outlines existing measures supporting these children, demonstrating that a solid framework was already in place in the country before the adoption of the NAP. This framework includes laws ensuring access to essential services in education, healthcare and affordable and adequate housing for children with disabilities and their families. Nonetheless, the NAP does not specifically identify the barriers and challenges that children in need, including those with disabilities, face, nor does it set clear targets or objectives for addressing these issues. Therefore, the upcoming Biennial report presents an opportunity to address these gaps as well as to deliver a comprehensive and effective roadmap that better supports the needs of all children, especially those with disabilities.



Key data and figures

- **Children with a disability:** In 2022, there were **8,988 children with a disability**. Among the various types of functional impairments, the distribution of diagnosed disability is as follows:
 - General medical conditions: 4,685 children
 - Mental and behavioural issues: 3,285 children

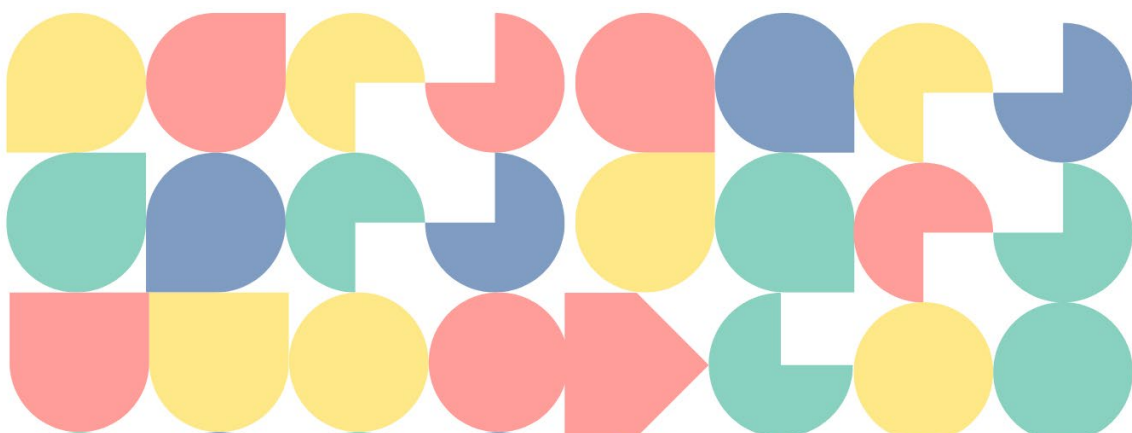
- Movement impairments: 326 children
 - Hearing impairments: 481 children
 - Visual impairments: 280 children.
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- **Children in care outside the family:** In 2022, 90.9% of these children were cared for in a family-like environment. Only 9.1% of all children in care outside the family - 527 out of 5,798 children - were in out-of-family care provided by a long-term social care and social rehabilitation facility. Childcare placement occurs only when guardianship or foster care is unsuitable, and the child stays there until appropriate care is found.
 - **Children with mental health issues:** No data on children with mental health issues are provided in the National Action Plan. However, it is stressed that in Latvia, support for children with mental health issues, as per the European Child Guarantee, also includes addressing somatic health issues that affect social inclusion, including for children with disabilities and special needs.

Key challenges

The Latvian National Action plan does not present the key challenges and barriers the different categories of children identified as in need face.

National legal framework

- Latvian National Development Plan (2021-2027): It aims to reduce child poverty (ages 0-17) from 17.5% in 2018 to 11.5% by 2027.
- Education development guidelines for 2021-2027.
- Public Health Guidelines for the years 2021-2027.
- Guidelines on accessible housing for the years 2023-2027.
- Child, Youth and Family Development Guidelines for the years 2022-2027.
- Regional policy guidelines for the years 2021-2027.



Key targets and objectives

The Latvian National Action Plan does not provide specific targets or objectives for addressing the specific needs of children identified as in need.

Key measures

Social benefits

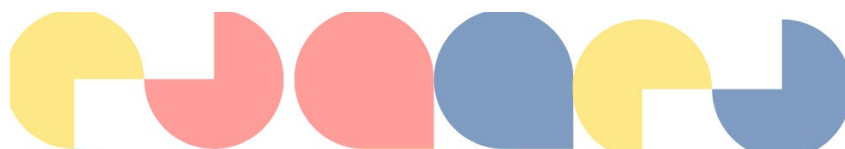
- **Carer leave:** Employers must grant additional paid annual leave to employees caring for a child with a disability up to the age of 18, entitling them to three working days. Employers must pay the average earnings for this leave.
- **State social benefits and remuneration:** In the case of a child with a disability, family benefits are increased by an additional amount. As of 1 January 2024, this amount is €160 per month. A disabled childcare allowance of €313.43 per month is paid to a caregiver of a child recognised as disabled by the State medical commission and needing special care due to physical or functional impairments.

ECEC

- **Support children with special needs:** The Law on the Protection of Children's Rights was amended on 1 October 2020 to enhance support for children with special needs. Since 1 September 2021, all children receive a special needs assessment upon starting compulsory education with individual support provided. Pre-primary schools must assign a staff member to assess special needs using a specific form evaluating basic skills and behaviour. Results are shared with legal representatives, and if needed, specialists conduct further assessments and create an individual learning plan. Municipal pedagogical-medical commissions continue assessing special needs for children up to age five and those in early education.

Inclusive education

- **Fighting drops out:** From 2017 to 2023, the State Service for Quality Education has implemented the ESF project 'Support to Reduce Early School Leaving' to tackle student dropouts. The project established a cooperation system between schools, municipalities, educators and parents to identify at-risk students and provide tailored support, including professional development for teachers, methodological tools and a joint database to track interventions. In addition to financial assistance for transport, meals and accommodation, the project prioritised long-term solutions by creating an inclusive and supportive educational environment.





Each semester, a personalised support plan was drafted based on drop-out risks, offering counselling and guidance from educators, psychologists, youth workers, teaching assistants, special needs teachers, sign language interpreters and occupational therapists.

- **Support children with learning difficulties:** The National Centre for Education implemented the '*Skola2030*' project from 2016 to 2023. It introduced a competency-based curriculum for general education, from pre-school to secondary level, updating learning materials and developing programmes for children with special needs. Training was provided for 16,843 educators, including 4,710 teachers. The project also involved pilot schools, early education establishments and created a teaching resources website.
- **Travel subsidies:** Children with disabilities (0-18) and their companions are eligible for benefits, including free public transport on regional routes. There are also discounts for large families and families with disabled members.
- **Inclusive education authority:** Municipalities must establish an education authority to oversee education quality and provision including different measures, including fostering the development of a system of support measures for the municipality's pupils and their families.

Healthcare

- **Latvia's Law on Disability** outlines measures to prevent or reduce disability risks and mitigate the consequences for individuals with predictable or actual disabilities. These measures include developing individual rehabilitation plans, ensuring consistent rehabilitation processes and involving society in addressing disability-related issues. Physicians and municipal social services contribute to creating and monitoring these plans. Support services, such as State-funded assistants, companions, psychological services and sign language interpreters, are provided to children and individuals with disabilities. Priority access to State-funded services is guaranteed along with other support measures specified in legislation.

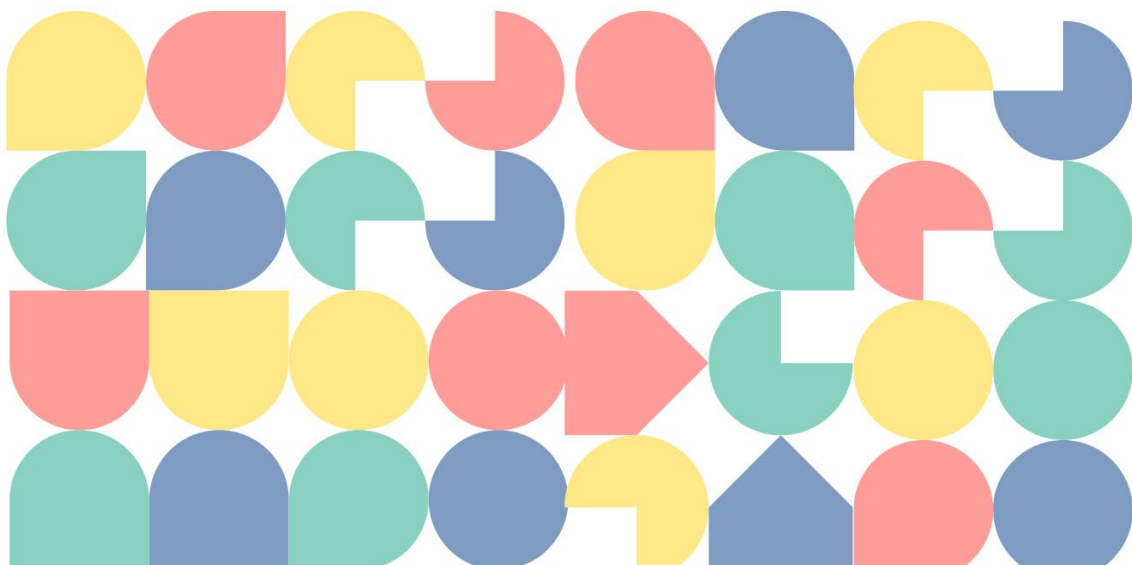
Housing

- **Law on assistance with the resolution of housing issues:** It provides for a series of benefits, including social housing, temporary accommodation, housing allowance, allowance for repair construction and rent and

assistance with making housing and its environments more accessible. Eligible categories include persons evicted from rented or owned residences with high priority when members have high support needs or children with disabilities and young persons without parental care who ended their foster care programmes.

- **Access to social housing:** Eligible categories for social housing include families with children with disabilities when they lack a separate room or when the home is deemed unfit for use, as well as care leavers who are considered unable to live independently.
- **Financial support to pay electricity:** The Law on the electricity market entitles protected users, including families with children with disabilities, to assistance with electricity bills, funded by the State budget.
- **Payment reduction:** Families caring for a child with a disability are entitled to a reduction in the invoices related to electricity bills.
- **Housing allowance:** Under the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance, municipalities provide a housing allowance to families with a child with a disability.

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