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Dear J. Steinruck and V. Blinkevičiūtė,

This week, the European Parliament will vote on your proposal for the introduction of a European Child Guarantee, financed by the European Union (EU) budget, to lift European children out of poverty. By means of this letter, the European Academy of Paediatrics (EAP) wishes to show its warm support to this important initiative.

The EAP is the official voice of children, families and paediatricians in Europe as the Paediatric section of the European Union of Medical Specialities (UEMS). It includes professional paediatric societies from all EU Member States and European paediatric sub-specialty societies as well as paediatricians from other European countries. As paediatricians, we are very aware of the health consequences of child poverty. Poverty means more than material and financial shortage in childhood; it also encompasses persisting exposure to disease, trauma and disadvantage.

Poverty increases the likelihood and severity of chronic diseases in children. Leading causes of disease and mortality in children, like prematurity, obesity, asthma, failure to thrive and trauma due to accidents, are strongly linked to poverty. In addition, access to effective interventions is often lacking. Poverty also has a critical impact on overall wellbeing, such as exposure to emotional trauma, child abuse or neglect, and violence. It also prevents academic attainment. Importantly, protective factors are frequently absent. As a result, effects of childhood poverty often continue into adulthood and on into successive generations. Therefore, addressing child poverty is essential for a healthy European population.

The EAP finds it alarming that more than one in four children in the EU is currently at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Importantly, the number of severely deprived children has increased between 2008 and 2014. As such, poverty is a widespread and persistent health risk for too many European children.

Fortunately, the negative effects of poverty on child health and wellbeing are preventable, either by keeping children out of poverty, preserving the health and wellbeing of children who live in poverty, or restoring optimal wellbeing for children who have already experienced its negative consequences. Therefore, on behalf of European children, the EAP is grateful for your investment in young people and your dedication to the implementation of policies to lift European children out of poverty and into healthier lives.

The EAP is highly concerned by issues such as poverty and migration, and advocates children's rights and health throughout Europe. We wish you a positive vote this week and are looking forward to future collaboration on this important topic.

On behalf of the European Academy of Paediatrics UEMS SP

Yours sincerely,

Professor Tom Stiris, President of the European Academy of Paediatrics