



EU PRESIDENCY SCORECARD

Performance assessment of the Cyprus EU Presidency from a Child Rights perspective

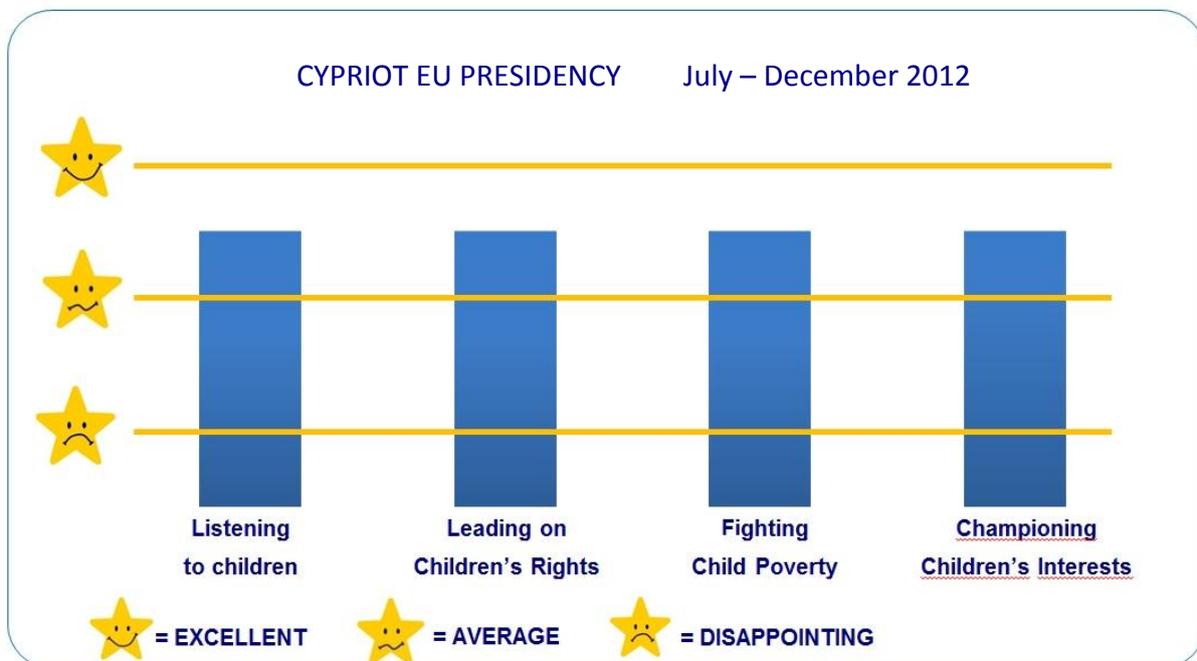
Promotion of **child well-being** was identified as a **clear priority** for the Cyprus EU Presidency. The government took a holistic approach and included the elements of

- **prevention of child poverty**,
- protection and
- access to adequate resources and services in its work.

A special place was reserved to **participation of children and young people** in the discussions. For example, a group of young people presented their messages to the EU policy-makers at the Presidency Conference on Child Poverty and Well-Being (October 2012).

The Presidency voiced its strong support for a speedy adoption and an ambitious scope of a forthcoming **EU Recommendation on Child Poverty and Well-Being**, while the EPSCO Council Conclusions specifically dedicated to child poverty gave a useful direction for its **practical implementation**. It is therefore regretful that whereas the EPSCO Council recognized the need to **back up social inclusion actions with EU funding instruments** to achieve the best outcomes for children, this has not been followed up in the negotiations on the **Multiannual Financial Framework**, where the Presidency compromise proposal envisaged severe cuts in some of the most crucial areas for children.

Overall, the Cypriot government ran a satisfying and encouraging EU presidency from a child's rights point of view.



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During their 6 month tenure of the EU Presidency, Member States have an important responsibility to ensure that the rights and well-being of children remain high on the EU political agenda. Children represent 20% of our present, but 100% of the future. Strong, genuine commitment to children's rights and well-being is an investment in the future; it is also an obligation to which all member states have signed up under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is the fifth in a series of assessments of EU Presidencies. It assesses performance on 4 criteria: Listening to children, vision and leadership for a strong children's rights strategy, action and cooperation at EU level to fight child poverty, and children's interests in the Presidency programme.

DID THEY LISTEN TO CHILDREN?



The EU Youth Conference on "Youth Participation and Social Inclusion" took place in September 2012 and brought together youth delegates and government officials to discuss how participation can lead to better social inclusion of young people, especially those with migrant backgrounds. At the end of the Conference, Joint Recommendations addressing issues of youth participation, social inclusion and democracy were adopted.



The July 2012 European Road Safety Day gave the opportunity to children and youth to participate in the policy-making process, proposing measures to improve road safety. However, it is not clear whether the suggestions made by the youth delegates will be considered or implemented in practice.

DID THEY LEAD ON THE EU CHILD RIGHTS AGENDA?



The closing event of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, held in December 2012 and the resulting Roadmap towards and beyond the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012 showed the commitment of various stakeholders to contribute to intergenerational solidarity. A Eurochild member was given an opportunity to present a good national practice of positive grandparenting. Overall, however, the focus on active aging overweighed the perspective of children's rights and wellbeing issues.



In November 2012, the Education, Youth and Culture Council adopted Conclusions on the European strategy for a Better Internet for Children, calling for better protection of the rights to privacy of children and young people, better Internet content, ensuring online safety and fighting child sexual abuse images.

DID THEY STRENGTHEN EU COOPERATION TO FIGHT AGAINST CHILD POVERTY?



EPSCO Council Conclusions on Preventing and Tackling Child Poverty and Promoting Children's Well-being were adopted on 4 October 2012. The Council acknowledged that more and more children live in poverty and social exclusion, and stated its support for comprehensive anti-poverty measures, including monitoring mechanisms, data collection and cross-policy synergies.



The October 2012 Conference Investing in Children: Preventing and Tackling Child Poverty and Social Exclusion, Promoting Children's Well-Being provided a timely response to the urgent need for the European Commission to address the growing child poverty, curb austerity measures and move ahead with an ambitious Recommendation on Child Poverty and Wellbeing with a clear Road Map for implementation. However, it was disappointing that there were no senior government officials to hear the messages of the children participating in the Conference.

DID THEY CHAMPION CHILDREN'S INTERESTS THROUGHOUT THEIR PROGRAMME?



The Informal Meeting of Ministers for Employment and Social Policy on stakeholder engagement in July 2012 was important to strengthen the participatory process and the role of the civil society in the Europe 2020 Strategy in terms of monitoring its developments, as well as in formulating and implementing the NRPs.



The Cypriot Presidency letter note following EPSCO to the General Affairs Council from November 2012 stressed a number of deficiencies in the Europe 2020 process and in the overall economic policy of focusing on fiscal stability and austerity, rather than pursuing a holistic and balanced social policy mix.



In negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020, with a steering role played by the Presidency, debates advanced at a high speed and reached levels of ministers and prime ministers. It was disappointing however, that the first compromise proposal that the Presidency put on the table envisaged severe cuts in the headings most relevant for children, and thus set the course of ensuing negotiations.



In his speech for the December 2012 EPAP Convention, the President of the Republic of Cyprus Demetris Christofias stressed that decision-makers cannot and should not "put the weight of the current crisis on the shoulders of those who barely earn a living", and that austerity alone will not solve EU's current troubles, but exacerbate them.

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Avenue des Arts, 1-2 - B-1210 Brussels - Belgium

T +32 (0)2 511 70 83 - F +32 (0)2 511 72 98 - www.eurochild.org - info@eurochild.org

Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to promote the welfare and rights of children and young people. Our aim is to voice and promote the interests of children and young people in the European Union and in particular those who are vulnerable and exposed to poverty and social exclusion. Our work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).