



Assessment of the EU Presidency Performance from a Child Rights perspective

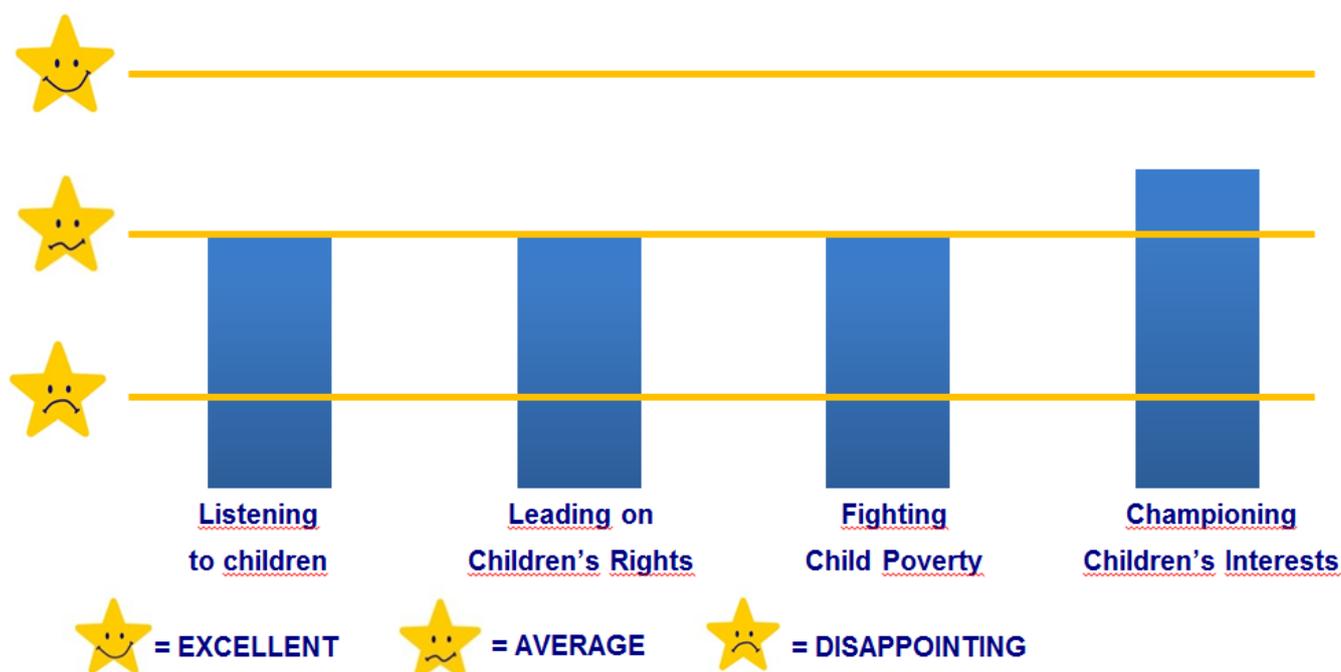
During their 6 month tenure of the EU Presidency, member states have an important responsibility to ensure the rights and welfare of children remain high on EU political agenda. Children represent 20% of our present but 100% of the future. Strong, genuine commitment to children’s rights and welfare is an investment in the future; it is also an obligation to which all member states have signed up through their ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This is the fourth in a series of assessments of EU Presidencies. It assesses performance on 4 criteria:

- The extent to which they listened to, and involved children and young people themselves;
- Their vision and leadership for a strong children’s rights strategy at EU level;
- Their support for stronger action and cooperation at EU level to fight child poverty;
- The extent to which children’s interests are reflected in the broad Presidency programme.

Bringing Europe out of crisis has dominated the headlines under the Danish Presidency. However, growth and job creation have once again taken precedence over making the EU a Europe for its people. The budget negotiations, steered by the Presidency, have taken a dangerous turn when the Ministers proposed shifting the focus of the European budget from fight against poverty and social exclusion to macroeconomic conditionality – a move strongly opposed by Eurochild and other NGOs. At the same time, the Presidency recognized the fight against child poverty as an important part of anti-crisis measures: Eurochild welcomed the organization of a thematic conference and the strongly worded Council Conclusions to support this message. Overall, the Presidency characterized by an impressive number of isolated events that informed children, but little follow-up to ensure longer-term consistency.

DANISH EU PRESIDENCY January - June 2012



DID THEY LISTEN TO CHILDREN?



The Presidency organized public events to promote [young people's participation in democratic life](#) (18 March) and [access to art and culture](#) (19 April). In doing so, it took a child-centered approach and involved young people. However, the Presidency's approach to participation of children and young people has been somewhat minimalistic throughout, and children did not get to be involved in all Presidency activities on a continuous basis

DID THEY LEAD ON THE EU CHILD RIGHTS AGENDA?



Denmark organized a conference on children's rights and the prevention of child poverty linked to the the bi-annual meeting of the intergovernmental group Europe de l'Enfance. A workshop on Effective child participation in policy-making and implementation featured contributions from young people. However, despite the strong messages calling to reinforce the fight against child poverty in times of crisis, little practical follow-up to the Conference has taken place.

DID THEY STRENGTHEN EU COOPERATION TO FIGHT AGAINST CHILD POVERTY?



The debate on the future of the European budget was characterized by the worrying reluctance of the Council to uphold the people-friendly proposal of the European Commission. In its meetings in [April](#) and in [June](#), the European ministers made a move to scrap the clauses making the spending of the European money conditional on the obligation to promote non-discrimination and equal opportunities, and to fight against poverty and social exclusion. The Council also proposed to reduce the proportion of the European Structural Funds to be spent on lifting people out of poverty.



European social affairs ministers [identified](#) combating intergenerational transmission of poverty and social exclusion as a key policy area in need of innovative measures. The Council called on the Member States and the Commission to strengthen efforts to combat child poverty, ensure participation of children and improve family support, paying special attention to children in vulnerable situations.

DID THEY CHAMPION CHILDREN'S INTERESTS THROUGHOUT THEIR PROGRAMME?



The Council adopted [Conclusions](#) welcoming the initiative to set up a Global Alliance against Child Sexual Abuse Online, agreeing that the Alliance should seek to obtain international political commitments from world governments to prevent child sexual abuse online, address the needs of victims and prosecute offenders. The Council conclusions were preceded by a [Presidency](#) seminar on combating child pornography on the Internet.



The Presidency hosted a high-level [conference](#) on Unaccompanied Minors arriving in Europe from third countries, focusing on exchange of experiences, challenges and sustainable solutions.



The Presidency steered the Council debate on the value of education to the creation of growth and employment in Europe and adopted a [Joint Report on the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training](#). Nevertheless, the process was characterized by over-reliance on arguments of employability in times of crisis at the expense of equally important elements, such as personal development, language acquisition and social integration of young people, and the contribution of education to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

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