

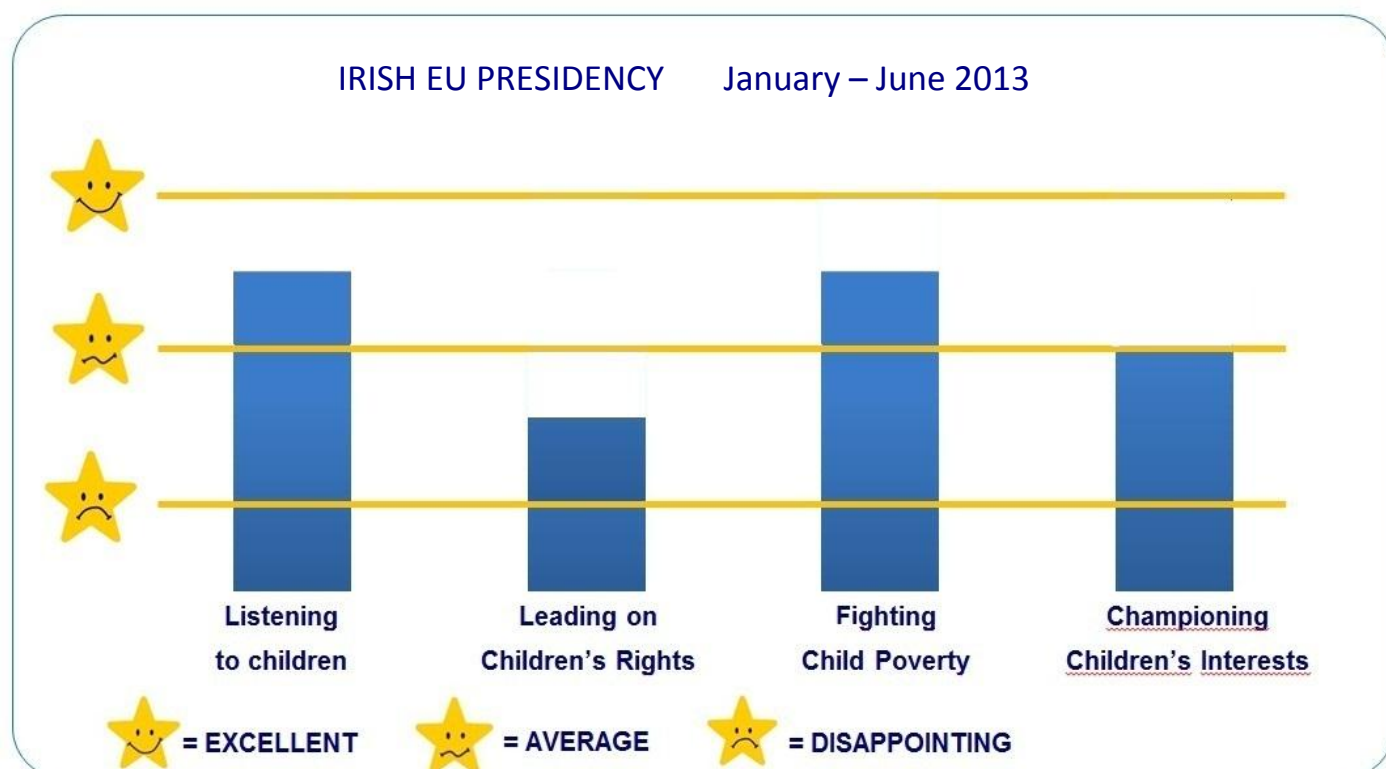


# EU PRESIDENCY SCORECARD

## Performance assessment of the Irish EU Presidency from a Child Rights perspective

Youth issues were top priority for the Irish Presidency. The focus on tackling the root causes of youth unemployment, particularly through education and training was welcome. The Presidency also took care to give a voice to young people particularly in its discussion on youth work.

Some important pieces of legislation relevant to children’s well-being were concluded during the Irish Presidency. Eurochild welcomes the vocal response from the Presidency to the [Social Investment Package](#) adopted by the Commission. However, the political deal reached with the European Parliament on the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 containing severe cuts in some of the most crucial areas for children is disappointing.



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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 sixth 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?

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The EU Youth Conference took place in Dublin in March, focusing on pressing issues such as contribution of youth work to social inclusion, inclusive education, youth participation and access to welfare. It was wound up with [Joint Conclusions](#) and accompanied by an informal policy debate on structured dialogue with young people.



Youth issues stayed high on the agenda of the Presidency, as evident from the [Council Conclusions](#) on Contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people, and the [Conclusions](#) on Maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

## DID THEY LEAD ON THE EU CHILD RIGHTS AGENDA?

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In February 2013 the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council adopted [Conclusions](#) on 'Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes', urging the Member States to provide equal opportunities for access to quality education and strengthen the role of education and training in the Europe 2020 Strategy.



The [third Annual Conference on Missing Children and 116000 hotlines](#), co-organised by the Irish Presidency in June, discussed innovative approaches and challenges to finding missing children.

## DID THEY STRENGTHEN EU COOPERATION TO FIGHT AGAINST CHILD POVERTY?

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The patronage of the Irish Presidency was a valuable contribution to the high-level political roundtable and seminar '**Taking action to fight child poverty and to promote child well-being**', organized by Eurochild, EAPN and UNICEF in Dublin in April. The event, dedicated to the implementation of the EC [Recommendation 'Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage'](#) was preceded by the launch of UNICEF Report Card on children's well-being with participation of Irish Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Frances Fitzgerald.



The June EPSCO Council [Conclusions](#) on the Social Investment Package (SIP) highlighted the potential of investing on early childhood education and care to address income, health and education challenges later in life. The Council particularly welcomed the European Commission's [Recommendation on 'Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage'](#) - which is part of the SIP - and urged the Member States to take concrete rights-based measures, including providing access to adequate resources and services for children and families, to tackle child poverty.



In June, the EU Heads of States, chaired by the Irish EU Presidency, concluded the 2013 European Semester monitoring by generally endorsing the **country-specific recommendations (CSRs)**. Although in this year's CSRs there was a growing recognition of the need for targeted measures to tackle child poverty, deinstitutionalize, and invest in early years services, they are very much similar to those of 2011, and give little recognition to a necessary balance between macroeconomic and social & employment enhancing measures.

## DID THEY CHAMPION CHILDREN'S INTERESTS THROUGHOUT THEIR PROGRAMME?

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The [work programme](#) of the Trio Presidency (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece) endorsed 2014 as European Year for Reconciling Work and Family Life, which would promote work and family life balance, improve social integration, address child and family poverty and provide quality employment, including satisfactory wages and job security.



In March, the EU Health Ministers [discussed](#) the issues of childhood obesity, smoke-free environments and the impact of the economic crisis on health systems. The meeting also featured patient safety and best practice and information sharing in relation to services for children with complex developmental needs.



The Presidency reached a political deal with the European Parliament on the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020. However the overall EU budget of EUR 960 bn implies a reduction of resources under all headings, impacting on available funding for children. Negotiations advanced on the Employment and Social Innovation programme and the Rights and Citizenship Programme. Doubts remain on the Structural Funds, particularly, the European Social Fund: the Parliament's acceptance of the lower benchmark to social inclusion and poverty reduction, proposed by the Council, is unfortunate.

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*Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to promote the rights and well-being of children and young people. Our work is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and work in respect of its underlying principles.*