

LUXEMBOURG EU PRESIDENCY



PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FROM A CHILD RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

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About Eurochild



Eurochild advocates for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking. We are a network of organisations working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work.

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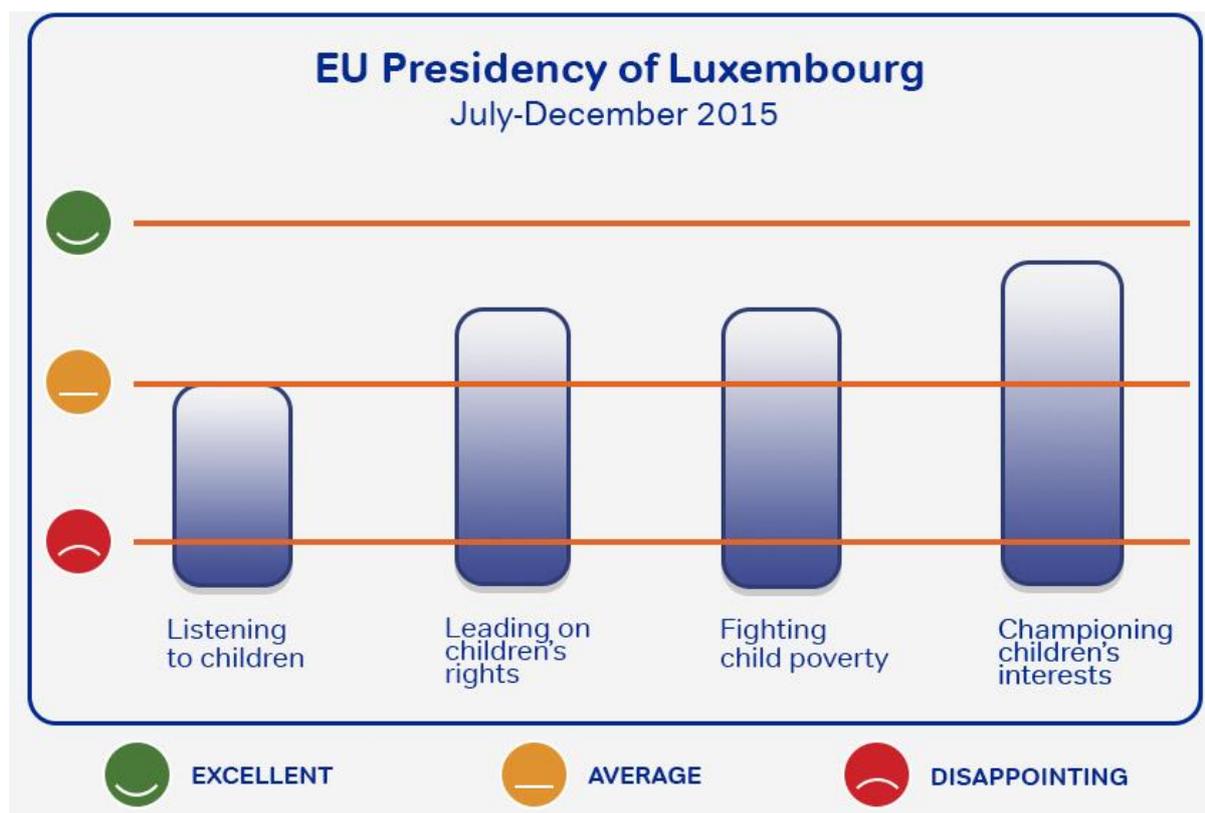
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SUMMARY

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 (UNCRC). This is the eighth in a series of assessments of EU Presidencies. It assesses performance on four criteria: listening to children, vision and leadership for strong children's rights strategy, action and cooperation at EU level to fight child poverty, and children's interests in the Presidency programme. This scorecard evaluates the extent to which a Member State promotes children's rights during their tenure of the 6-month EU Presidency. It does not reflect how well the country fares in its overall treatment of and investment in children and young people.



Find this and all other EU Presidency Scorecards at <http://www.eurochild.org/policy/eu-watch/eu-presidencies-scorecards/>

Did they listen to children?

During the “[Inclusive education: Take action!](#)” Youth Hearing on 16/10, 250 young people aged 14-25 had the opportunity to share their views and propose recommendations for inclusive education.

Although not with the direct participation of children, the [European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty](#) was organised with the Presidency support on 19-20/11 and offered people experiencing poverty the opportunity to share their experiences, obtain recognition and give visibility to this highly sensitive matter. One of the key messages of the event was that poverty cannot be defined solely by financial poverty, but should take account of all other aspects such as cultural poverty. The alarming levels of child poverty and homelessness across Europe were highlighted.

The [European Youth Conference](#) organised under the Presidency from 22/09 to 24/09 focused on the inclusion of young people into the decision-making process. The event enabled youth representatives and representatives from EU Member states to discuss current challenges and to agree on a set of [recommendations](#) to boost political participation in the democratic life in Europe.

Did they lead on the EU child rights agenda?

Participation and education were at the core of the 23-24/11 [Education and Youth Council](#), where the Council adopted a Joint Report on the implementation of the Framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). The report highlights how Member States are committed to fostering participation and inclusion of all young people into society. Ministers also adopted the 2015 joint report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for [European cooperation in education and training \(ET2020\)](#). For the remaining five years, ET 2020 will have 6 new priority areas (instead of 13), aiming to ensure that education and training systems promote employability, skills and innovation, increase social mobility and equality, help to prevent radicalisation and lay the foundations for democratic values and active citizenship. At the same time, the Council adopted [conclusions](#) on school dropouts that called on Member States to make good use of EU instruments like the Erasmus+ programme, the European Social Fund and the European Fund for Strategic Investments.

The Council and the European Parliament agreed a compromise text on a [directive on procedural safeguards for children in criminal proceedings](#). The purpose of the directive is to provide procedural safeguards for children who are suspected or accused of having committed a criminal offence, providing additional safeguards to those that already apply to suspects and accused adults. These include the assistance by a lawyer and provision of information on rights, the right to have an individual assessment, the right to a medical examination, and the right to audio-visual recording of questioning. It also provides special safeguards for children during deprivation of liberty, in particular during detention.

Thanks to the mediation of the Presidency, considerable improvements were made in the [Equal Treatment Directive](#), namely in aspects related to disability. However, a final agreement was not reached, and negotiations will continue in 2016.

In the field of judicial protection, [the 9-10/07 Informal JHA Council meeting](#) focused on a possible revision of a Regulation on judgments in matrimonial matters and the matters of parental responsibility. Under the guidance of the Presidency, Ministers agreed that cooperation is particularly important in family separation, as it should provide children with a secure legal environment by allowing them to maintain relationships with persons holding parental responsibility.

Did they strengthen EU cooperation to fight against child poverty?

In order to strengthen the social dimension of the EU through the European Semester, the Luxembourg Presidency has often advocated for economic and social affairs to be better balanced within the European Semester. At the [General Affairs Council](#) on 17/11 it committed to promoting a better exchange between the ESPCO¹ and the ECOFIN² Council. This key message was echoed in the 7/12 EPSCO Council meeting, where the Council adopted [conclusions on social governance for an inclusive Europe](#) and debated over flexicurity and how to best integrate the social policy dimension into governance. On that occasion, Minister Schmit said that focusing social indicators on inequality and poverty is key to integrating the economic and social Europe. Ministers stressed the need to give the EPSCO Council its full political role in the economic and social governance of the EU, and tighter cooperation between the ECOFIN and EPSCO configurations.

In the field of education, the actions taken by the Luxembourg Presidency fed into the work previously done by Italy and Latvia, namely in integrating the economic, social and personal aspects of education. At the [Education Committee](#) on 3-4/12, Ministers reiterated their commitment to developing an inclusive education that offers equal opportunities to all citizens regardless of their social or cultural origin.

The [informal EPSCO Council](#) 17/07 focused on the changes in the labour market and linked gender equality and children's rights to employability of parents and reconciliation of professional, private and family life between men and women. There was a debate on social governance between ministers without any outcome.

In a [conference on individual taxation and employment](#) on 29/10 Minister Schmit stressed that only making child support systems more accessible will not increase women's employment rate, if this is not accompanied by a favorable taxation component. Likewise, the [Social Protection Committee \(SPC\) report on the social policy reforms for growth and cohesion](#) endorsed at the 5/10 [EPSCO Council](#) highlighted the importance of affordable Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) not only in improving women's employability,

¹ Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

² Economic and Financial Affairs Council

but also in helping children develop cognitive and social skills and in improving their prospects for a better adult life.

Did they champion children's interests throughout their programme?

The theme of education was addressed in response to the increasing challenges Europe is facing. In the wake of the migration crisis and the Paris attacks, the Presidency stressed the importance of education as a factor shaping citizenship and spreading EU values. The role of citizenship was part of the [Conference on EU Citizenship and Justice](#) on 14-15/09, while the 23-24/11 [Education and Youth Council](#) stressed the importance of culture in preventing radicalisation and promoting tolerance, intercultural dialogue, social integration and mutual respect. The concept had been expressed in an earlier [joint declaration](#) between the Ministers of Education of the EU, the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and the President of the CULT committee of the European Parliament.

In terms of children and migration, the [meeting of the Directors General responsible for school education in the EU Member States](#) (26-27/10) highlighted the need to include all pupils into the school system quickly. Children from migrant backgrounds are indeed most at risk of early school leaving.

Education and early childhood care was also on the agenda throughout the six-month programme. The Presidency organised a [Conference on Diversity Multilingualism in Early Childhood Education and Care](#) on 10-11/09. Participants stressed the importance of giving children access to quality education from the outset and identified concrete measures and best practice to support the quality framework for Early Childhood Education and Care proposed by the Commission in 2014.