

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MALTESE PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

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- **Prioritise investing in children in the EU political agenda**

Malta has proved to be a champion in the promotion of children's rights and well-being in Europe: the government has invested in children by providing financial support to community level services, increasing investment in childcare, and promoting social justice and inclusive education.

Eurochild encourages the Maltese Presidency to translate such efforts at a European level, taking advantage of this opportunity to place children's rights and well-being at the heart of the EU political agenda.

Eurochild is currently leading a research project, [Childonomics](#), investigating the long-term social and economic value of investing in children. Malta has been chosen as a partner country, due to its strong political commitment to child and family policies and its interest in building a stronger evidence base to support policy and spending choices. In light of Malta's consolidated efforts towards investing in children, the Presidency is encouraged to further champion this goal at a wider EU level.

We suggest that the Presidency works with the Commission to better monitor, reinforce and review the implementation of the Recommendation '[Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage](#)'. In particular, the Presidency should call on the European Commission to allocate sufficient resources to the effective follow-up of the Recommendation and to promote **investment in children, families and communities**. This is supported by the adoption of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment 19 on 'Public budgeting for the realisation of children's rights' (2016). As the Commission is due to make a proposal for the next **Multiannual Financial Framework** by the end of 2017, we encourage the Presidency to use this opportunity to making sure that it sufficiently supports tackling child poverty, fostering social inclusion, protecting and promoting the rights of refugee children and the transition from institutional to community-based care.

- **Strengthen social protection systems and services**

The Presidency should work towards the implementation of new policy and legislative instruments to ensure that the EU not only provides stronger safeguards to increase women's participation in the labour market, addressing availability and quality of work, but also **promotes a support framework to enable working parents to find a better balance between work responsibilities and family life**. Such efforts should focus on the accessibility, availability, affordability and quality of services, community development, welfare support and protection policies, particularly for vulnerable families.

As quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) services can contribute to the social and personal development of the child and give the child a good start in life, we remind Member States to take the best interests of children into account in the crucial debate on work-life balance.

Eurochild suggests that the Presidency encourages the inclusion of social benchmarks relating to childcare into new EU instruments, such as the upcoming **European Pillar of Social Rights**. Debates in the Council on the initiative should lead to a clearer understanding of the

opportunities it provides, the development of implementation and accountability mechanisms and the policy coherence it enhances with other, existing policy and financial frameworks.

Eurochild commends the Maltese Presidency's commitment to eradicating **violence** against women (VAW), and would like to offer its support to strengthen the evidence on how to effectively coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to multiple forms of violence - including **against children** - that occur within the family and across the life course, and explore opportunities for shared learning and action.

- **Mainstream children's rights and foster inclusive participation**

Eurochild calls on the Presidency to ensure that all actors involved in EU legislative and policy processes comply with children's rights, which should be effectively mainstreamed and applied to legislation, policy and funding, in relation to EU institutions whose work directly or indirectly impacts on children's lives. Eurochild acknowledges Malta's efforts to engage with children and young people in the decision-making processes at a national level and invites the Presidency to **foster a meaningful and ongoing engagement of civil society, and especially children themselves**, at a European level. A stronger engagement of children and young people in decisions affecting their own lives should inform and direct the work of the Presidency.

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About Eurochild



Eurochild
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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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