



LATVIA EU PRESIDENCY

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FROM A CHILD RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

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About 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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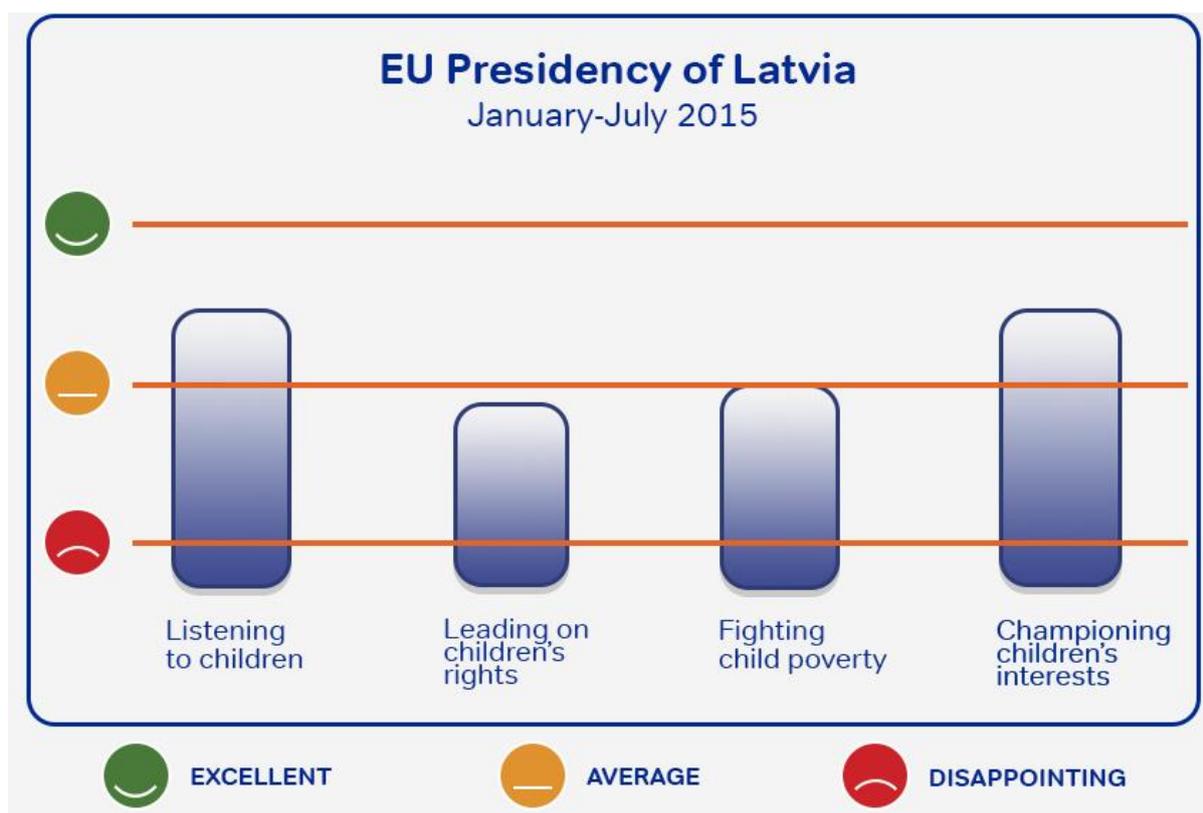
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SUMMARY

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?

From 9 to 11 February, the Latvian Presidency hosted the [2nd Eastern Partnership Youth Forum](#) gathering a wide range of stakeholders, young people and policy makers from the EU Member States and the Eastern Partnership countries. Participants discussed the tools for enhancing employment of young people, such as mobility and partnership programmes, cross-sectorial cooperation, youth policy development, exchange of good practices and innovative ideas.

Between 24 and 26 March 2015, the [EU Youth Conference](#) “Empowering young people for political participation in democratic life in Europe” took place in Riga under the auspices of the Latvian Presidency. Bringing together representatives of youth organisations, policy and decision makers from both EU and national level, the dialogue resulted in a set of recommendations on enhanced involvement and participation of young people in political decision-making and political empowerment of all young people. Participation, cross-sectorial policy cooperation and structured dialogue with youth were also part of the [policy debate](#) of the EU youth ministers on 18-19 May. The [Council conclusions](#) adopted focused on the role of early childhood education and primary education in developing creativity, innovation and digital competences, and highlighted the importance of providing personalised approaches to learning, including for children with disadvantaged backgrounds and special needs.

The issue of youth participation also featured throughout the [European Youth Week 2015](#) during which the Latvian Presidency took part in the high-level panel debate on enhancing youth participation to prevent intolerance and antidemocratic behavior.

Did they lead on the EU child rights agenda?

On 8 June, there was a [joint meeting](#) of the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizen’s Rights and Free Movement of Persons (FREMP) and the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) with the input from FRA. The meeting aimed at providing the Council with a comprehensive understanding on how to harmonise the EU’s internal and external human rights strategies. The focus was on integrated child protection systems and combatting racism and xenophobia.

The Latvian Presidency organised an international [conference](#) in Riga on 28-29 April addressing to the role of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the legislative process of the European Union and its application in the European Union’s case law. Unfortunately there was no progress towards an EU framework on children’s rights during the Presidency.

Did they strengthen EU cooperation to fight against child poverty?

With regard to the European Semester, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council adopted conclusions on the Annual Growth Survey and on the [joint employment report](#), and endorsed the [key messages](#) by the Social Protection Committee. Among other things, the key messages recommended that investing in children and young people be a political priority as this would both improve the social situation and reduce poverty and social exclusion in the long term. The Council also reached a [political agreement](#) on the guidelines for the employment policies of the member states. Although the guidelines were improved compared to the original proposal and refer to the life cycle approach for tackling poverty, it does not mention investing in children as a priority like the 2010 guidelines have.

The Council in March highlighted the need for [inclusive labour markets](#) and sustainable and adequate social protection systems. They recognised the need for social inclusion strategies, affordable quality childcare services as a key driver for women's labour market participation, but failed to mention the impact on children at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Did they champion children's interests throughout their programme?

On 23-24 February the Presidency organised a high-level [conference](#) on "Healthy Lifestyles: nutrition and physical activity for children and young people at schools" in Riga. The participants discussed the progress towards the implementation of the strategies on nutrition and physical activity and future challenges for policies striving to reduce childhood obesity and promote healthy lifestyles. The event also debated issues like school meals, special catering, enabling environment, health education, health literacy, physical activity, modern technologies and mobile applications for children and young people to promote healthy eating habits and healthy lifestyle.

Between 11 and 12 May, the [high-level meeting](#) on the progress in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities took place in Riga. Focus of the meeting was inclusive education and inclusive employment of persons with disabilities, namely children with disabilities. Participants called for comprehensive and interdisciplinary solutions to ensure children with disabilities fully enjoy human rights and fully participate in all spheres of life. They also stressed the need to use all relevant funds, including the EU Structural Funds, to improve accessibility and support social inclusion, encourage de-institutionalisation and promote independent living on the basis of personal choices, as spelled out in the UNCRPD.

In December 2014 and short before taking over the Presidency, the Latvian delegation took part an institutional [debate](#) to explore how the new European Commission and European Parliament could support the national transition from institutional to community-based care. The transition is in line with international human rights standards, such as the UN

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

At the request of the Latvian Presidency, the European Economic and Social Committee prepared an exploratory opinion on long-term social care and de-institutionalisation, as a civil society contribution to the implementation of social services reforms and the improvement of long-term care. A [public hearing](#) was organised on 12 February at the EESC, in order to better understand the situation across the EU, examine challenges and look at effective solutions.

The outcomes of the discussions fed into the [conference](#) on Deinstitutionalization and the Further Development of Social Care Policy in Europe that took place in Riga on 15 June 2015. The conference had the ambition to enable the exchange of experience among policy makers, policy implementers, social service providers and NGOs at different stages of the deinstitutionalization process to foster mutual learning, identify challenges and share good practice.