ENOC Position Paper on
“The consequences of the economic crisis on Independent Children’s Rights Institutions”

Adopted at the 16th ENOC General Assembly, 12 October 2012, Nicosia

On the occasion of the 16th Annual Conference and General Assembly meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus in October 2012, the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) would like to draw the attention of all competent authorities in the 33 countries¹ with ENOC member representation, to the detrimental impact of the economic crisis on children in general and on the level of protection and promotion of their rights.

In the current economic context, we commit ourselves to ensuring that respect for the rights of the child is guaranteed, whatever their circumstances.

We once again remind our States of their obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially with regard to Article 4², which imposes an obligation on States parties requiring active action to ensure the fullest possible implementation of the Convention. In General Comment n°2, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child defines the primary role of NHRIs³ to promote the implementation of the Convention and considers the establishment of such bodies falls within the commitment made by the State parties upon ratification to ensure effective implementation of the Convention.

The ongoing economic crisis many of our countries are facing is taking a heavy toll on public social investment, affecting services provided to children and on families’ subsistence costs (food, housing, health). The effects of this crisis on the life prospects and development of children presents one of the greatest challenges our respective

¹ To date, ENOC gathers 41 member institutions in 33 countries within widest Europe. The full list of ENOC members is available on the ENOC website http://crin.org/enoc/members/index.asp

² Article 4: States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.

³ National Human Rights Institutions
institutions face. We should constantly work to make certain that respect for the rights of the child remains high on the political agenda of respective governments. Efforts should be made to sustain and expand social investment and social protection for those in the most vulnerable situations, giving priority to children.

During the past few years, some of our member institutions have seen their areas of action reduced, human and material resources cut and even their very existence called into question. We all have fresh in our minds the recent decision of the Spanish authorities of the Autonomous Community of Madrid to close down the Office of the Regional Ombudsman for Children in Madrid due to budgetary cuts imposed by the current recession.

We strongly believe that despite extremely sensitive and difficult economic conditions, there should be alternative solutions to allow well-established Independent Children’s Rights Institutions to adapt their activities to the new circumstances, but continue to advocate for the respect of the Rights of the Child.

Any inter-institutional rationalisation policies should not prevent Ombudspersons for Children institutions remaining independent, visible and accessible to children and young people. They should continue to be given extensive means in terms of available human and material resources to allow them to successfully fulfil their first and upmost mandate, which is to protect and promote the rights of the child.

As Independent Children’s Rights Institutions we should be able to continue our work, joining our efforts with other public and civil society organizations in order to defend and secure the protection of all children’s rights; in particular, the widely threatened child’s right to an adequate standard of living.

Therefore, we should all once again remind our respective authorities that Ombudspersons for Children play a critical role in monitoring the realization of children’s rights and remain a uniquely independent voice for children and young people!