A Council of Europe Initiative against corporal punishment of children

International Launch in Zagreb, 15 June 2008

“Raise your hand against smacking”

Contribution by the European Children’s Network to the debate on “Eliminating corporal punishment of children: Questions and Answers”

Question 4: What are we doing or what are we going to do?

Thank you chair.

The European Children’s Network, EURONET, is very pleased to be involved in the Council of Europe’s initiative to eliminate corporal punishment of children throughout Europe. And we would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak at the international launch of the campaign today in Croatia.

EURONET is a network of 36 children’s rights NGOs from across Europe, campaigning for the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child across the European Union. Many of our members see on a daily basis the effects that violence has on children and young people, and are working in their countries to end corporal punishment of children.

Numerous human rights bodies, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, have made it clear that corporal punishment of children breaches children’s fundamental human rights to respect for their dignity and physical integrity. This reality provides an immediate imperative for ending the practice. The way in which children speak powerfully about how being hit hurts them both physically and emotionally also leaves us in no doubt that the physical punishment of children by parents is a violation of a child’s human right to be protected. A seven year old girl described how it feels to be smacked “You’re hurt and it makes you cry and drips come out of your eyes”.

As the speakers in the previous session already indicated, essential steps to achieve abolition include law reform, awareness raising and support for parents. Twenty seven countries in Europe have already gone through the process of law reform, or have said they will do so. But much work still needs to be done to make Europe a corporal punishment free zone for children.
EURONET’s members are committed to working together at European level to strengthen their work against corporal punishment. This year, within EURONET they will share experiences of campaigns they have undertaken to raise public awareness about corporal punishment and to bring about legal reform. They will share examples of support they provide to parents to develop more positive parenting methods, and they will share experiences of involving children and young people in discussions on these issues. As a child stated “I don’t agree with parents who aggress their children, they should communicate with their children for making them understand…”

EURONET is also committed to adding a strong European NGO voice to the tireless campaigning going on across Europe to end all forms of corporal punishment of children. EURONET is pleased to be working with the Council of Europe campaign to add to its valuable work.

In particular, we will push for European Union decision-makers to make a public commitment to the elimination of corporal punishment of children, as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has already done. EURONET will later this year be asking decision-makers to sign up to a European Statement of Support for the eradication of corporal punishment of children. The Statement will be launched in Brussels, including by a group of children and young people from different countries who will help to make sure the voice of children and young people is heard at European level. As a child in a consultation carried out by one of our members stated on smacking “It’s cruel. It’s not right. It’s abuse. It should stop now”. We hope that many Governments, Members of the European Parliament and others will express their support by adding their names to this Statement.

We believe that this will add to the political momentum that is developing across Europe to give children full protection from this form of violence.

Europe has a strong human rights framework to ensure that children enjoy the same protection from violence as adults. Now it is time that governments fulfil this commitment in practice.

EURONET and its members will continue to work at national and European level to make Europe a corporal punishment free zone for all children.

Thank you.

MIEKE SCHUURMAN
Secretary General
European Children’s Network