PRESS STATEMENT

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European Summit:
Children’s Rights to be protected in new “Reform Treaty”

The European Children’s Network, representing children’s rights NGOs from across Europe, welcomes the agreement reached on 23 June by the European Council on the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) mandate, which includes references to the protection of children’s rights in the internal and external objectives of the European Union.

“This is a significant first step towards the recognition of the rights of the 100 million children living in the European Union,” said the Children’s Network Secretary-General, Mieke Schuurman.

The European Children’s Network also welcomes the statement that the Charter of Fundamental Rights will be legally binding, though concerns are raised by the opt-out option. As children’s rights organizations, we have been actively involved in the conventions on the Charter of Fundamental Rights and on the Future of Europe, which both led to the inclusion of children’s rights in the Constitutional Treaty text and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

“With the protection of children’s rights included in the EU’s objectives for the new ‘Reform Treaty’, for the first time in the history of the EU, children’s rights will be legally recognized in the EU Treaties”, declared Mieke Schuurman.

Other positive elements are that the EU will have a legal personality, allowing the EU to accede to international conventions and treaties, and that the EU will accede to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. EURONET also welcomes the Council Conclusion that national criminal records systems will become interconnected through a European network as soon as possible; this would ensure that citizens with criminal records for abusing children are known throughout the EU.

EURONET will monitor the work of the upcoming IGC, although there has been little indication so far that there will be an open process. EURONET calls on the EU political leaders to keep citizens well informed on the IGC process to prevent a widening of the gap between the EU’s citizens and the European project.

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Notes to editors:
The European Children’s Network (EURONET) is a coalition of networks and organisations campaigning at European level for the interests and rights of children. Its activities include policy development research, and projects involving children and young people directly.

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