News from Eurochild

Upcoming Events

Seminar on Early Years in the European Parliament

The historical division of “early years’ education and care” over time contributed to the marginalisation of early years services. Its impact is still visible at EU level and EU policy has been reticent on entitlements to pre-school services. In 2002, member states agreed the so-called ‘Barcelona targets’ for childcare places. Five years after the targets were set, only five member states have met the target of childcare places for 33% of children aged 0-3 and only 8 the 90% target for children aged 3-6 years.

As a follow-up event to the workshop on early years which took place during its annual conference in November 2007, in April 2008 Eurochild will organise a Seminar in the European Parliament in Brussels. It will be linked to the launch of the Report Card N°8 on early years by the UNICEF Innocenti Report Centre. The seminar will examine the
implications for EU member states of the launch and how countries are implementing issues around child wellbeing in early years.

Members’ Exchange Seminar on Child & Youth Participation

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), children and young people should participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Article 12 of the UN CRC insists that children’s views are given weight and should affect the decisions made about them. Efforts are needed to reach and to involve those children who are socially excluded. This is why Eurochild would like the European Union to pay special attention to the participation of children, especially of the most excluded ones, in the EU political and democratic life.

In this framework and to follow up on one of the workshops which took place during its annual conference in November 2007, Eurochild will organise a membership exchange seminar on child and youth participation. It will take place on 2 October 2008 in Cardiff, Wales/UK, following the annual meeting of the World Forum on Child Welfare.

More information on those two events will appear soon on www.eurochild.org

News from the European Institutions

Frattini 'disappointed' by member states on child protection

"I am disappointed that so many member states have failed to inform the Commission about their implementation of our 2003 work." Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini said on 4 December 2007, when speaking at the 'Innovation Day' event in Brussels. "This includes essential provisions such as prosecuting sex tourism and the special treatment of children as vulnerable victims in criminal proceedings. I urge all member states that are reluctant to co-operate with us to fight this horrible crime", he added.

While not mentioning the member states at fault, he did said about a quarter of the 27 EU members either did transpose European rules in this area at all or only partially. Mr Frattini stressed in his speech that more should be done to protect children from sexual abuse, noting that the problem of child pornography is rapidly growing on the internet. Besides appealing to member states to enforce European law, he intends to criminalise child ‘grooming’ across the Union. Grooming are actions undertaken deliberately to befriend and establish emotional control over a child in order to facilitate sexual abuse later on – such as frequently chatting with the child on the internet or giving compliments and presents.

Mr Frattini also gave his full support to initiatives taken by the private sector to safeguard children from abuse. He mentioned the addition of a ‘report abuse’ button on the Microsoft instant messenger service MSN - with more than 240 million users in the world one of the most popular instant messenger services - which led to a drastic increase in reporting of incidences by youngsters.

For more information: http://euobserver.com/9/25270/?rk=1

Consultation on European 'School Fruit Scheme'

On 18 December the Commission launched a public consultation on a possible 'School Fruit Scheme' as the next step in the ongoing Impact Assessment exercise. This consultation seeks to collect the opinions and experiences of sector stakeholders and interested members of the public on four policy options regarding a possible European 'School Fruit Scheme'. The options are set out in a consultation paper, which has been elaborated by a Commission working group, taking into account the results of a series of hearings and discussions which have already taken place with sector representatives, experts in and outside agriculture as well as Member states. The public consultation is open till the end of February.

The paper itself as well as the mailbox to which opinions should be sent can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/markets/fruitveg/sfs/public/index_en.htm

Promoting language learning as 'leisure'

More needs to be done to promote language learning outside of formal educational settings if breakthroughs are to be made in spreading language use across the EU, said Commissioner for Multilingualism Leonard Orban on 31 January, presenting the conclusions of a report on multilingualism.
Encouraging EU citizens to speak at least two "adoptive languages" - languages other than their mother tongue and used on a lifelong basis at work or at home - is a key focus of a High-Level Group report that was presented on 31 January by Commissioner Orban. The report – entitled "A Rewarding Challenge: How the Multiplicity of Languages could strengthen Europe" - says the Commission must do more to promote language learning outside of schools and universities, stressing in particular that more effort must be made to target adult learners. It suggests that language learning be made part of leisure activities such as sports.

However, education remains a national competence and the EU executive can only circulate best practice and give guidelines.

For more information: http://www.euractiv.com/en/culture/eu-promote-language-learning-leisure/article-169978

**New EU draft directive on Health Care**

In a press release entitled "After Bolkenstein, here comes Kyprianou", European Social NGOs denounced the lack of a solidarity approach taken by Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou in the draft Directive establishing a Community framework for the application of patients' rights in cross-border health care, that was released on 20 December 2007. In their opinion, this proposed directive is made mostly for those who have the financial means to seek healthcare in another member state. Even if their health bills are reimbursed by their national healthcare system afterwards, travelling patients need to pay for other expenses (travel, accommodations, translators, etc.) The EU directive should also take into account other issues which are in the general interest of everyone living in the EU, such as equal access to affordable high quality health services for all, including particularly vulnerable groups.


**Launch of European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008**

In 2007, the EU has been celebrating the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

In December 2007, the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 was launched with the slogan 'Together in Diversity'. At the same time, seven pan-European flagship projects and national projects funded by the European Commission during the Year were announced and the official website of the European Year was launched. The projects are involving culture, education, youth, sport and citizenship. It aims to encourage understanding, tolerance, solidarity and a sense of common destiny among people in Europe.

According to European Commission data presented in December 2007, three out of four EU citizens welcome dialogue with other cultures. For more information on this issue, please go to: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

However, the 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' has been criticised by personalities in the field of culture who say that the Commission's sudden interest in cultural pluralism is at odds with its own day-to-day policy-making. They warned of running the risk of misusing culture and intercultural dialogue as a way of hiding social and economic differences, and of stigmatising these differences as "cultural". Some people underlined that Europe should promote "cosmopolitan awareness" of the individual rather than stick to "narcissistic differences".

For more information: http://euobserver.com/9/25405/?rk=1

For the European Year: www.dialogue2008.eu

**European Year for Combating Poverty & Social Exclusion2010**

The European Commission in December 2007 officially designated 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The campaign aims to reaffirm the EU's commitment to making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010. The 2010 European Year aims to reach EU citizens and all public, social and economic stakeholders. Its four specific objectives are:

- Recognition of the right of people in poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and to play a full part in society;
- An increase in the public ownership of social inclusion policies, emphasising everyone's responsibility in tackling poverty and marginalisation;
- A more cohesive society, where no one doubts that society as a whole benefits from the eradication of poverty;
- Commitment of all actors, because real progress requires a long-term effort that involves all levels of governance.

Recent Eurobarometer data show that Europeans see poverty as a widespread problem. Across the EU, citizens feel that around 1 in 3 people (29%) in their area live in poverty and that 1 in 10 suffers extreme poverty. In all member states, part of the population is subject to exclusion and deprivation, often facing limited access to basic services. 19% of children are at risk of poverty across the EU and 1 in 10 live in households where nobody works.

The European process for social protection and social inclusion supports member states in their drive for greater social cohesion in Europe through an Open Method of Coordination (OMC).
The 2010 European Year will coincide with the conclusion of the EU’s ten year strategy for growth and jobs. The actions undertaken during this European Year will reaffirm the initial political commitment of the EU at the start of the Lisbon strategy, in 2000, to making “a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty” by 2010.

For the EC Press Release:

Draft code of conduct for lobbyists

A draft code of conduct for lobbyists published in December 2007 by the European Commission has come under fire from transparency campaigners and lawyers. The draft requires lobbyists to follow the principles of “openness, transparency, honesty and integrity”. Lobbyists should follow six core rules which include identifying themselves, declaring their clients and providing accurate information to EU institutions. They should not obtain information dishonestly or induce officials to breach internal staff rules. When employing former officials, they should abide by their institutions’ rules and confidentiality requirements. Anyone breaching the code would be suspended from a register of lobbyists.

But Paul de Clerck of Friends of the Earth Europe, a member of the steering board of the pro-transparency campaign group ALTER-EU, said: “It’s disappointing that it’s taken the Commission six months to come up with something that is weaker than what is in lobbyists’ own codes.” De Clerck said that the draft code failed to mention specifically avoiding conflict of interest and not offering financial inducements as core rules. Instead, it only makes indirect reference to existing rules for the staff of EU institutions. He added that ALTER-EU regretted that the Commission had not included a specific reference to ending the practice of “revolving doors”.

For the whole article:
http://www.europeanvoice.com/archive/article.asp?id=29478

EU proposes stricter rules on toys

The EU has proposed new toy safety rules in the wake of a wave of product recalls in the last year of toys manufactured in China. It considers toys not being like any other product, as they are used by the most vulnerable elements of our society, which is why there can be no compromise in toy safety. A new directive is to replace toy safety legislation dating back to 1988. In particular, the rules cut the permitted levels of cancer-causing chemicals and lead and mercury in toys. The directive also introduces a total ban on toys encased in chocolate, marshmallow or other foods, such as partly plastic, partly candy rings.

In the last year, a series of recalls of toys produced in China were initiated by some of the biggest names in toy manufacturing, including Disney, Mattel and Fisher Price. While the measures have been welcomed by Toy Industries of Europe – the sector’s trade association, the European Consumers’ Organisation, or BEUC, using its French acronym, says the directive does not go far enough.

To the relief of children across Europe, however, the beloved Kinder Surprise chocolates, in which little collectible toys are found hidden within milk chocolate eggs, are safe from the ban.

For more information:

EP asks for pro-active EU Roma policy

The European Parliament (EP) has adopted on 31 January 2008 a resolution on a European Strategy on Roma strongly condemning all forms of racism and discrimination faced by Roma and others regarded as ‘Gypsies’. The EP also reminds the EU and the member states that they have a shared responsibility to promote inclusion of the Roma and uphold their fundamental rights as European citizens. The EP firmly called on the member states and the EU institutions to endorse the necessary measures in order to create the appropriate social
and political environment for implementing the inclusion of the Roma.

The EP also asks the new Agency for Fundamental Rights to place anti-Gypsyism among the highest priorities in its work programme. Finally member states are urged to solve “the problem of camps, where there are no hygiene or safety standards and where a large number of Romani children die in domestic accidents, particularly fires, caused by the lack of such standards”.


Presidency of the EU

Priorities for CoE - EU co-operation

In the framework of dialogue and cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union, Dimitrij Rupel, Foreign Minister of Slovenia, presented to the Council of Europe's Ministers' Deputies in Strasbourg the main themes of Slovenia's EU presidency.

Mr Rupel drew attention to:

- the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, which will allow the EU to become a signatory to the Council of Europe European Convention on Human Rights;
- the European future for the Western Balkans, for which the Council of Europe has made an important contribution, especially in Kosovo;
- the dialogue between cultures, religions and traditions, underlining the major importance of the White Book on inter-cultural dialogue currently being prepared by the Council of Europe.

The Deputies noted with satisfaction the concrete intentions for cooperation with the Council of Europe and specific areas in which it could develop. Minister Rupel had also met with Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis.

Caritas Europa briefing on Slovenian Presidency

In view of the forthcoming Slovenian EU Presidency, Caritas Europa has submitted an information briefing to the Slovenian Permanent Representation in Brussels providing views in four main areas.

The first chapter (Social Policy) focuses on tackling child poverty through policy measures in support of families. Caritas Europa believes that child poverty should not be thought of in exclusively economic terms. It has frequently found that child poverty encompasses social and cultural exclusion along with the lack of monetary support. The organisation reaffirms through this chapter that child poverty is an issue of poverty within the family and presents a number of proactive measures to combat it.

For more information: http://www.caritas-europa.org/code/EN/advo.asp?Page=768

European Ombudsman

Checking whether European Commission pays its bills on time

The European Ombudsman, Mr. P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has started an investigation into the subject of the timeliness of payments made by the European Commission. This follows complaints from individuals, companies and organisations involved in EU-funded projects and contracts. The Ombudsman has asked the Commission to provide information on what has been done to avoid late payment, statistical data on late payment cases, as well as information about the Commission's policy on paying interest.

Mr Diamandouros said: "Small and medium-sized enterprises, schools, NGOs and other organisations rely on timely payments for their work on EU projects. I am confident that the Commission will, in the future, do its best to avoid delays which often cause considerable problems for complainants with limited financial resources".


Ombudsman hails NGO scrutiny of EU institutions

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a key role to play in uncovering maladministration in the EU institutions, the European Ombudsman has underlined. He relies on complaints from NGOs to help him uncover possible instances of maladministration in the EU institutions.

This recently happened for example with decisions on two complaints lodged by Polish environmental NGOs and Greenpeace. In total, NGOs have made around one thousand complaints to the Ombudsman over the last decade. These complaints of alleged maladministration by the EU institutions mainly concern environmental projects, late payment for contracts granted by the EU, and a perceived lack on transparency in the institutions.

ECJ in support of working carers

A preliminary judgement by the European Court of Justice on 31 January 2008 could boost the rights of millions of employees taking care of disabled relatives and prevent them from indirect discrimination. Poiares Maduro, the advocate general at the European Court of Justice said that UK national Sharon Coleman, a legal secretary in London, was unlawfully forced out of her job for demanding flexible hours to look after her disabled son. He argued she had suffered from "discrimination by association" and suggested that EU laws that guarantee fair treatment at work for disabled people extended to those connected with them. It protects people who, although not themselves disabled, suffer direct discrimination and/or harassment in the field of employment and occupation because they are associated with a disabled person. A robust conception of equality entails that these subtler forms of discrimination should also be caught by anti-discrimination legislation. His opinion is likely to set the tone for a final decision due to be taken by a panel of European judges later this year. In most cases, the court tends to follow the initial legal advice.

However, the UK's Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) suggested the verdict could cause "resentment" between workers and "sour industrial relations in the workplace", with employers possibly getting accused of favouritism towards some employees. The problem could become acute, particularly for small companies where other staff would have to pick up colleagues' work, the FSB suggested, according to the BBC.

For more information:
http://euobserver.com/9/25579/?rk=1
For the EU court preliminary judgement:
http://curia.europa.eu/jurisp/cgi-bin/form.pl?lang=EN&Submit=Rechercher$docrequiere=alldocs&numaff=C-303/06&datese=&datef=nomusuel=&domaine=&mots=&resmax=100

2008 will be "the year of hope after a year of disappointments"

Speaking at the Court's annual press conference in the Human Rights Building in Strasbourg, on 23 January 2008, its President Jean-Paul Costa conceded that the main disappointment in 2007 had been Russia's refusal to ratify Protocol No.14 to the European Convention on Human Rights, thus blocking its entry into force. Protocol No.14 is essentially a package of measures to streamline the Court's procedures and speed up the treatment of cases. Its non-ratification meant, among other things, that many judges whose terms of office could have been extended by two or three years would be replaced in the course of the year, inevitably slowing down the Court's efficiency.

On a more positive note, Mr Costa's identified the seeds of hope for 2008:
• the possibility of finding alternatives to Protocol No. 14 and other ways of dealing with manifestly unfounded cases before the Court;
• the complementary work of the other parts of the Council of Europe in preventing violations of the Convention;
• efforts at national level to implement the Court's judgments and prevent human rights abuses;
• the prospect of EU accession to the Convention.

Mr Costa also explained that the number of pending cases before the Court had risen 15%.

For more information about the European Court of Justice: http://www.echr.coe.int

Food & drink companies’ child ad pledge

Eleven major food and beverage companies, including Nestlé and Coca-Cola, have jointly pledged in December to change the way they advertise to children. They have established a common benchmark against which they can jointly monitor the implementation of company-specific commitments to responsible advertising to children. The commitment follows Commission calls to restrict advertising of unhealthy foods as childhood obesity is rapidly increasing in the EU.

For more information:

Fundamental Rights Charter proclaimed

The Presidents of the European Commission, Parliament and the Council signed and proclaimed the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in Strasbourg. The Charter will give European citizens a catalogue of rights legally binding on the institutions and bodies of the European Union and on the member states when they are implementing EU law.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights was initially proclaimed by the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission at the Nice European Council on 7 December 2000, but this was merely a political commitment carrying no binding legal effect. In the context of the work on the European Convention and the 2003-2004
Intergovernmental Conference, the Charter was adapted -in particular as regards its general provisions- with a view to making it legally binding.

Article 24 of the Charter explicitly refers to the rights of the child - as expressed in Articles 3 and 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For more information about the Charter: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/default_en.htm

First EU-Australian Regional Youth Interfaith Forum

For the first time, the EU and Australia co-hosted a Regional Youth Interfaith Forum to explore how religious tolerance can be promoted among young people. The Forum was held in Perth, Australia on 4-7 December and brought together young religious leaders from the diverse religious communities of South East Asia, Europe and Australia. The theme of the Forum was “Embracing Diversity: Delivering messages of understanding”. The Forum provided an opportunity for youth leaders to come together to establish friendships, build bridges and set about developing practical strategies aimed at promoting messages of tolerance and understanding among young people in their communities back home. A second Forum is envisaged for 2008/2009 in Europe.

For more information on EU-Australia Relations: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/australia/intro/index.htm

News from the European Network of Masters in Children’s Rights

The European Network of Masters in Children’s Rights (ENMCR) had the kick-off meeting of its newest Project: Child Rights Education Development: Moldova and Serbia (CREDMOS) in November 2007 in Berlin. The project aims at establishing Master Study programmes in 3 Serbian and one Moldovan University leading to dual degrees with the recently launched European Master in Children’s Rights at the Freie Universität Berlin and the Universitatea Babes-Bolyai in Cluj (see: www.fu-berlin.de/emcr).

The MA programmes are to include 2 core modules dealing with Childhood Studies and Children’s Rights and will have a specific focus in the remaining 3 modules at each partner university. The cooperating partners are situated in different disciplines, ranging from social work and education to legal studies and sociology. By this it is expected to reach a wide audience and bring a child rights focus into various professions in the long run.

More information on the projects progress will be available soon on www.enmcr.net. If you wish to learn more about the project now, you may contact the project coordinator Daphne Gross at: d.gross@fu-berlin.de

News from European countries

Austria

Commissioner Hammarberg presented human-rights report on Austria

On 12 December 2007 the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg presented his report on the human-rights situation in Austria. He underlined the positive steps undertaken by the Austrian authorities to improve the protection and promotion of human rights and welcomed the ongoing constitutional reform process as an opportunity to codify clearly all fundamental rights. However, he observed the need for further improvements and made a number of recommendations, focusing mainly on freedom of expression, protection against discrimination, the treatment of asylum seekers and the monitoring of police behaviour.

The Commissioner suggested that Austria retains the constitutional status of the European Convention on Human Rights in the Constitution and called for children’s rights to be included in the codification of fundamental rights. Moreover, he recommended that the independence of the Human Rights Advisory Board should be strengthened.

France

Association aims to promote value of sport

A new sports association launched in France is aiming to convince politicians and business to give more support for innovative projects that promote the social role and fundamental values of sport. “Currently, only professional sport is represented in our society. The basic sport does not have any voice, nor does it capture media attention,” said Sport et Citoyenneté administrator Julian Jappert, explaining the reasons for which the new association was founded.

Sport et Citoyenneté (Sport and Citizenship), officially launched in November 2007, has its headquarters in Marseille and Brussels, but “we have a European-level vocation,” explained Jappert. The stated aim of the association, which aspires to become a strategic player on the European stage, is to “convince decision-makers from politics and
business of the unique opportunities that sport offers”.

The association also aims to develop a role as a provider of “strategic advice to innovative projects that promote the social role of sports” as it believes that “some of sport's fundamental values, such as respect and solidarity, should serve a greater social good”.

Sport et Citoyenneté is financed by the European football governing body UEFA and the sports clothing company Nike.

For more information:

Germany

Debate on Children’s Rights in Germany

"Kinderrechte ins Grundgesetz". Because of reports on incidents of child maltreatment in Germany, a huge interest on Children’s Rights has arisen in the media, where a heated discussion is going on about the issue. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) has taken on the topic and is pleading to make children’s rights constitutional. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) on the other hand is strictly against it.

There is a fear, that processes will stagnate and that the issue may be buried again within some months. Of course different actors, especially the German Child and Youth Welfare association (Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk) in cooperation with UNICEF are investing energy to prevent the issue from disappearing.

A campaign has been launched, which has in the meantime been signed by almost 10,000 individuals. The goal is to collect the missing signatures to reach the threshold by the end of the year. You can send your signature electronically on: www.kinderrechteins-grundgesetz.de

For statements concerning the issue (in German):

Germany moves to mend gaps in Child Safety Net

Horrified by recent cases of infanticide, Germany wants mandatory doctor’s visits and is debating adding constitutional protections for children. In children’s rights, Germany has lagged behind other European countries.

Recent news stories of mothers arrested for killing their children have pointed out the holes in Germany’s child welfare safety net. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel called for taking a dual approach to protecting children. Parents need more support, she said. Yet there's also a need for better monitoring to make sure children are not left in an abusive situation.

Doctor’s visits for young children should become mandatory across the country, politicians decided at an emergency meeting Merkel called to discuss the topic on 19 December 2007. The doctor visits are envisioned as part of an early warning system to help detect possible abuse.

For the moment, children’s rights won’t be specifically enshrined in the Constitution (Grundgesetz), as Germany’s Social Democratic Union (SPD) had hoped. Mentioning children specifically in the constitution would ensure that both the legislature and the courts weighed child welfare carefully when making every decision, said Germany's Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries of the SPD. The CDU rejected the need for additional legal protections beyond the human rights already part of German law, saying they were unnecessary.

However, seventy German children's rights groups have called for a constitutional change, as they think that it is very important for children themselves to have their own specific rights. They are a specific group and they are more vulnerable than adult citizens.

For the whole article:
http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,3013141,00.html

Hungary

Gipsy school segregation persists

Despite government efforts to eradicate it, separation of Gypsies in school classrooms in Hungary appears as a deep-rooted problem difficult to resolve. The Hungarian government has invested heavily in education but some sociologists argue that extra money for schools in disadvantaged regions could be blamed for the enduring problem of the Romany, or Gypsy, segregation.

State-run schools receiving extra funding through the government’s integration programme are not popular with middle-class parents, who often withdraw their children to send them to better schools. The parents’ choice leaves those schools with a majority of Gypsies and the programme, aimed at integrating disadvantaged children with their “mainstream peers” actually collapses.

Attila Z. Papp, a researcher of the Educational Survey Council, said a local town mayor told him that segregation perhaps was the only solution. Gabor Daroczi, a former government commissioner for Romany integration, said integration would stand a chance if people supported the programme. But, it
is a sad truth that a majority of the society supports segregation.

Source: http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/169045.html

The Netherlands

Resolution on Orphans adopted in Dutch House of Representatives

On 20 November 2007 the Dutch House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer) unanimously voted in favour of a resolution on orphans. Mr. Kees van der Staaij of the Political Reformed Party (SGP) initiated this widely supported resolution with the following text:

“We recognised that there is more than 150 million orphan’s worldwide (biological, social and cultural) deprived of the guidance and protection of their primary caregivers and more vulnerable to child trafficking, child slavery, child soldier and becoming child refugees; That is why we believe this large group of vulnerable children deserve special attention.

It is clear from the conference held by World Initiative for Orphans that there is internationally not enough attention or urgency on the topic children without parental care and there is not enough being done to reduce this crisis. We request that the government research within the policy for Department of Sustainable Development for the care, rights and protection of a child without parental care what can be done to for this situation and inform the chamber on their findings”.

A resolution to the (Parliamentary Assembly) Council of Europe (all 47 European countries) by the World Initiative for Orphans (WIO) is in preparation to address the urgent need for action for these vulnerable children. This resolution will be given notice by several members of the Dutch Parliament.

UK

Debate on EU child rights strategy by UK Parliament

On 18 December 2007 the UK Parliament’s European Standing Committee debated the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. The Minister for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning Bill Rammell stated that the UK government would certainly welcome a more joined-up approach to the policy area, but it would like to be able to put across its own views on where EU action does and does not add value. Although the Union does not have general competence to legislate on children’s rights, there are areas in which legislative action may be justifiable under the treaties if there is an appropriate legal base.

For full records from the meeting:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmgeneral/euro/061218/61218s01.htm

Autism Education Trust

The Autism Education Trust (AET) is a new organisation established with funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families. It is dedicated to coordinating and improving education support for all children with autism in England. The AET is a collaboration between The National Autistic Society, TreeHouse and The Council for Disabled Children, alongside a number of professionals and organisations working in the autism field.

They are looking for anyone with an interest in becoming involved with the work of the AET to contact them with their details. They would also like to hear any thoughts, comments and suggestions on any matters you feel would be of interest to the work of the Autism Education Trust.

For more information: http://www.autism.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=14999

For the Department for Children, Schools and Families: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/

New one-stop help and information website launched

StartHere, a new web-based resource, has been launched in the UK to direct people to specialist organisations that can help them, covering health, housing, education, employment and other social issues.

As well as being a useful tool for individuals seeking help, StartHere helps relieve pressure on charities by signposting people to other organisations for specialist issues. John Cameron, Head of National Child Protection Helpline at the NSPCC said, "The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline wishes to ensure that members of the public seeking our assistance receive the accurate and relevant information about services available to them. StartHere is able to provide to Helpline staff easily accessible information about a range of national services that calls to the Helpline are likely to use with the minimum of delay. The user-friendly style will help the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline improve resource searching and therefore respond to more calls." www.starthere.info

National Schools Radio Network launched by the Vision Charity

The Secretary of State for Schools, Children and Families, launched the National Schools Radio Network at the House of Commons in December
2007. The National Schools Radio Network has been pioneered by the Vision Charity in a bid to help dyslexic, visually impaired and blind children, but is also available to all students aged 11-18 years old. Led by their teachers, students will be encouraged to create and make programmes as a group activity in the classroom.

For more information:
or:

Initiatives from outside Europe

Ibero-American network of Ombudspersons for Children created

The first Ibero-American network of ombudspersons for children was created at a meeting at the end of November in Lima, Peru. Eleven ombudspersons from Central and South American countries attended the meeting, as well as one representative from Spain.

The meeting, which brought together regional ombudspersons for children for the first time, aimed to promote information sharing about their mandate and efforts to promote, protect and monitor child rights in their country; learn from the experience of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC); and create an Ibero-American Network of ombudspersons for children. Other areas of cooperation will be to strengthen children’s participation and the effective implementation of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to improve knowledge of how ombudspersons can work more closely with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the inter-American system of human rights.

For more information, contact the Peruvian Ombudsperson’s office at: prensa@defensoria.gob.pe

Council of Europe News

Europe is moving towards a total ban of domestic violence against children

An increasing number of European countries are showing determination to ban domestic violence against children. In his latest Viewpoint, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg, comments this important step towards the promotion of non-violent methods in child-rearing and equal protection of children and adults against corporal punishment.

For the copyright-free article:  
http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/previous2008_en.asp

Parliamentary colloquy on the teaching of European literature

Is there such a thing as “European” literature which can be taught to students? How is this affected by the politics of translation and distribution? Could there be a “common textbook” for young Europeans on their shared literary heritage? A panel of writers, editors, critics, literary academics, translators and publishers with sometimes opposing views discussed these and other questions with European parliamentarians – who in turn shape education policy in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe – at a colloquy on “the teaching of European literature” in Paris on 11 December 2007.

The colloquy, organised by the Committee on Culture, Science and Education of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), tried to clarify the concept of European literature, including its manifestations beyond Europe, and looked at how it is translated, distributed and taught, as well as the effect of new technologies and literary prizes. The discussions will contribute to a report by Jacques Legendre (France, EPP/CD) for debate by the 318-member Parliamentary Assembly in 2008.

For the programme and list of speakers:  
http://assembly.coe.int/Committee/Agenda/20071211NC2685_E.PDF

Motion for a recommendation on “promoting the teaching of European literature”:  

Entry into force of CoE Convention against trafficking in human beings

On 1 February 2008 the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings has entered into force. The convention focuses on the protection of victims of trafficking in human beings, whilst also aiming to prevent trafficking and to prosecute traffickers.

Why a convention on human trafficking?

Every year, more than 600000 people are sold in Europe. They are the victims of international criminals. More than 80 percent of them are girls and women, and 70 percent of them are forced into sexual servitude. Other victims are traded for the purposes of forced labour, illegal adoptions and organ transplants. After the arms and drugs trade, trafficking in human beings represents the third most profitable criminal activity in the world as a whole.

What does the convention foresee?
The Convention reinforces the prevention of trafficking, strengthens the prosecution of traffickers and protects the human rights and human dignity of the victims.

Who has ratified the convention?
So far 14 member states of the Council of Europe have already ratified the Convention: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Georgia, Malta, Moldova, Norway, Romania and Slovakia. These member states made a Joint Declaration urging other Council of Europe member states, non member states and the European Community to become parties to the Convention as soon as possible.

What are the next steps?
An efficient implementation of the Convention must now be assured through its monitoring mechanism, the Group of experts on action against trafficking in human beings (GRETA).

For more information:

For the CoE Convention:

Commissioner for Human Rights on new European migration policy

On the eve of the International Migrants Day, 18 December, Commissioner Hammarberg released a viewpoint and an issue paper in which he urges European States to improve the protection of migrants’ rights. Speaking in favour of regularisation and non-refoulement, the Commissioner criticises ”anti-foreigner expressions like ‘if they do not love our country they can get out’” and proposes practical actions for comprehensive migration policies based on facts and human rights.

The full text of this copyright-free article is available in English, French and Russian at:
http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/viewpoints/previou s2007_EN.asp

The issue paper on the human rights of irregular migrants in Europe can be downloaded from:

Terry Davison on prohibition of torture

In a speech at a seminar on action against trafficking in human beings, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the UK Home Office, which took place on the International Human Rights Day 10 December, Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis criticised suggestions to relax the absolute ban of torture under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Government of the United Kingdom has suggested that the application of Article 3 in expulsion and deportation cases should be revised in the light of current terrorist threats with a view to balancing the risks to national security against the risks to the individual of being ill-treated if he or she were expelled from the United Kingdom.

The Secretary General stressed that governments have the duty to protect their citizens from the threat of terrorism, but they must do so intelligently and effectively. It is misleading and dangerous to talk about the need to strike the right balance between security and human rights. One cannot treat the most fundamental principles of our societies the way the Bank of England fixes interest rates. Security and freedom are not alternatives.

For the full version of the speech:

Commerce a threat to sport in Europe

During its meeting in Strasbourg, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on 24 January warned that the unprecedented increase in the economic emphasis placed on certain professional sports - particularly in connection with TV retransmission rights - was becoming a threat to Europe’s democratic vision of sport as something open to everyone. The Assembly called on European governments to “uphold the European Sport Model based on the twin principles of financial solidarity and openness of competition”. More cooperation between sports authorities and public authorities was needed, the parliamentarians said, to put an end to corruption, trafficking in young athletes, fixing of matches and illegal betting.

The parliamentarians insisted that the special nature of sport must be recognised, and the independence of sports federations protected, adding that “the priceless contribution of hundreds of thousands of volunteers in the field of sport” must be acknowledged, and those volunteers supported “whenever necessary, by fiscal or other means”.

For more information: www.coe.int/press

United Nations News

Special Representative on Violence against Children

On 27 November, the UN General Assembly decided to establish a Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children. This decision is an important step forward in the fight
against all forms of violence against children. This historic opportunity is the result of years of campaigning on the part of children and young people, civil society and progressive governments worldwide and in response to the recommendations set out in the UN Study on Violance against Children. The decision forms part of new global commitments made by governments to realise the rights of children agreed each year in the Omnibus Resolution. For more information visit: http://www.rb.se/eng/Programme/un-child-protector.htm

‘A World Fit for Children’ follow-up event

More than 85 children, speaking over 20 languages and representing 63 countries, gathered in New York at the World Fit for Children +5 Children’s Forum. The Forum was organised for children’s voices to be heard at the meeting to evaluate the progress made in fulfilling the goals set out in the UN’s ‘World Fit For Children’ plan of action. The meeting was officially called the ‘Commemorative High Level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-Up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children’, and took place on 11-13 December 2007.

At the Forum, key issues related to the two thematic interactive round-tables were discussed, and participating children chose one boy and one girl to speak at the closing session of the plenary. In order to generate an interactive discussion, children also prepared their perspectives and issues to be raised at the round-tables.

The themes discussed at the round-tables were ‘Promoting healthy lives and combating HIV and AIDS’, and ‘Providing universal quality education as key to achieving the MDGs and as the first line of protection against abuse, exploitation and violence against children’.

To read the report: http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=15785&flag=report

Ombudsmen meeting

The second global meeting of children’s Ombudsmen took place at the UN General Assembly this week prior to the ‘World Fit for Children’ event. The first global meeting of Ombudsmen took place five years ago during the Special Session on Children. One of the important achievements of the Special Session was the formal recognition of the important role of independent human rights institutions for children in the promotion and protection of children’s rights at national level.

In the last five years, new offices have been established and new networks have emerged. The aim of this meeting was for ombudsmen institutions to share their experiences and prepare a statement to be delivered at the General Assembly meeting calling on governments to reaffirm the commitments made five years ago.

For a report from the meeting: http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=15825&flag=report

For more information on the ‘World fit for Children’ follow up event: http://www.crin.org/email/crinmail_detail.asp?crinmailID=2626

World Day of Working Children 9 December

11 years ago, at the first worldwide meeting of working children’s movements from all around the world the “Ten Articles of Kundapur” were proclaimed. This proclamation is considered to be the beginning of the worldwide union of working children’s movements.

This year, the Berlin based association ProNats (Pro Ninos y Adolescentes Trabajadores) coordinated the activities for celebrating the anniversary. Two movies about working children, one from the global South and one from Germany were presented followed by a lively panel discussion. One of the girls who was interviewed from the Germany based documentary was present along with the director of the documentary.

Many people are against children working for different reasons, such as the belief that children should not work but enjoy their childhood; or as soon as children are paid for their work, exploitation is not far away. The evening event attempted to impart a better understanding of children’s own positions.

For more information visit: http://www.pronats.de/index.php?id=81 and http://www.ifejants.org/

International Human Rights Day

Every year, 10 December is celebrated as the International Human Rights Day. It is the celebration of the anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was signed by the UN General Assembly in 1948. Its aim is to promote human rights protection all over the globe.

The promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms form the basis for tolerant and peaceful societies, and belong to the core values, upon which the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe is built. This is why it used this occasion, to spell out its priorities in the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. Among others, it would like to focus its attention on the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

The Council of Europe, the European continent’s human rights watchdog, is regarded as indispensable, when it comes to the safeguarding of human rights. And its aims are, clearly, nowhere
near to being fully realised. It recently signed an agreement with the European Parliament in Brussels, which should enable the two institutions to co-operate better in the future, by providing for more frequent mutual contacts and exchanges of information ‘upstream’.

For the full press release: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1223403&Site=DC&ShowBanner=no&Target=_self&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE

For more information on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/UDHRIndex.aspx

Further Reading

Second edition of Childhoods Today

The Centre for the Study of Childhood and Youth, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom, has published the second edition of the online journal for childhood studies “Childhoods Today”. Childhoods Today is a new e-journal published, bi-annually and supported by the Worldwide Universities Network. The aim of the journal is to publish high quality empirical and theoretical work by up-and-coming researchers in the field of childhood studies and to provide a reference for others working in this and related fields. It is externally reviewed and unique in providing an international forum designed exclusively for the publication of articles by postgraduate students working in the field. For the journal: http://www.childhoodstoday.org.

Meeting the needs of sexually exploited young people in London

This report presents the findings of a two-year research study mapping the service needs of young people at risk of sexual exploitation in London. The research was commissioned and funded by the Bridge House Trust and carried out by researchers from Barnardo’s between September 2003 and April 2005. The objective was to establish the level and nature of current need for services among young people at risk of sexual exploitation in London. This involved both investigating the nature and extent of sexual exploitation known, and exploring the experiences of services and young people, to identify promoting practice and gaps in service provision. Data was collected primarily through interviews including young people themselves. To download the report: http://tdh-childprotection.org/component/option,com_doclib/task,dll/docid,500/1,1/

FEANTSA Magazine on Social and Demographic Change & Homelessness

The autumn 2007 edition of the FEANTSA magazine focuses on the impact of social and demographic change. The evolution of the composition of the European population and the changing social fabric across the EU are having a major impact on the phenomenon of homelessness. The present edition brings together the experience of service providers and public authorities on the ground, and the changes documented by researchers, in order to offer a picture of how the social and demographic context has evolved across the EU and how these changes have become visible in the experience of homelessness and the profiles of people experiencing homelessness in Europe. Page 16 it features an article on “Child homelessness as a European social reality: Time to face the facts”. To download the magazine: http://www.feantsa.org/files/Month%20Publications/EN/EN_final_autumn07_socialdem.pdf

Special Social Platform magazine on social and demographic change

For one year, the Platform of European Social NGOs, has led a reflection and debate on social and demographic change. This debate aimed at shaping the current revision of the Lisbon agenda and the post 2010 phase, was continued at the Platform’s annual conference which took place in November 2007. This special edition of Social Voices brings together some of the elements of the debate to date. Building upon the discussions and debates, the Social Platform has also adopted a common position in December. This position will be the focus of a campaign aimed at a renewed vision and strategy for the EU that is shaped by a model of development based on solidarity, social justice and sustainability. To download it: http://cms.horus.be/files/99907/MediaArchive/News_section/Social_Voices/Special%20Edition%20EN.%20November%202007.pdf

Utopia y Libertad focus on Childhood, Youth and Society

You can download an edition of “Utopía y Libertad” with a focus on Childhood, Youth and Society, from ENMCR’s homepage at www.enmcr.net (section: news). The review is edited by the network for the inclusion of childhood and youth.

Europa Diary

The new Europa Diary is a practical diary that promotes citizenship education in schools. It covers areas such as consumer rights, environmental responsibility, career planning, European and world studies. It helps young people to make informed, responsible and independent choices and to develop confident and active citizens. It informs young people of the social, economic and
environmental consequences of their actions. To order the diary: http://www.generation-europe.org/orderform.asp

Children and HIV/AIDS in Uganda

Kindernothilfe has recently published a report “On our way - How communities can work for children affected by HIV/AIDS” which was carried out in two case studies in Uganda in April 2007. This report takes a close look at community based approaches, self-help groups and their ability to alleviate the burden of HIV/AIDS affected families and children. To download the report: http://www.kindernothilfe.de/multimedia/KNH/Downloads/Studie+On+our+way+HIV+Aids+in+Uganda-view_image-1-called_by-knh-original_site--original_page-3316.pdf

Human Rights in International Law - Collected texts (3rd edition)

This book is a broad introduction to the wide-ranging subject of human rights, comprising international declarations, charters, conventions and protocols from the major international organisations working in the human rights field at world and regional level. Included are texts from the ILO, UN, World Conference on Human Rights, Council of Europe, EU, Organisation of African Unity, Organisation of American States, OSCE and the Arab League. A large part of this selection of basic texts is made up of binding legal instruments drawn up by international organisations since 1930. Together they will serve as a tool for lawyers, legislators, diplomats, teachers and law students, as well as anyone involved in the work of protecting human rights. Price: 49€/75$ + 10% postage. Council of Europe Publishing: http://book.coe.int To place an order directly: http://book.coe.int/sysmodules/RBS_page/admin/re direct.php?id=36&lang=EN&produit_aliasid=2217

Announcements

ECOC is looking for volunteers

Europe’s Children-Our Concern (ECOC) is a voluntary organisation which aims to spread knowledge and techniques that help schools and parents to foster the abilities of those children and young adults who learn differently. It is a member of Eurochild.

Over the past few years the practical work of ECOC has evolved through our conferences and seminars offering an opportunity for school directors, teachers, parents, carers and educational establishments throughout Belgium to participate in in-depth discussions on the latest research and techniques by experienced experts in the field.

Our ultimate goal is to expand and include all European countries, and to enable them to offer education of a high calibre to all children whatever their educational needs.

However, we cannot achieve this without help and we are currently looking for enthusiastic volunteers at all levels of our organisation. You may already be an experienced volunteer with a background in either education or business, with time to spare and are looking for new interests and challenges. If so, please do contact us by sending an email to ecoc@ecoc.be so that an informal meeting can be arranged with our small group of volunteers.

Together, we can make a difference.

For more information about ECOC: www.ecoc.be

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Child and youth research in the 21st century
28-29 May 2008, Nicosia, Cyprus

This is the first international conference organised by the International Childhood and Youth Research Network. One of the main aims of the conference is to critically explore the intersection between research, policy, and practice by facilitating a dialogue between the different perspectives. In that sense, the conference envisons a productive, interdisciplinary dialogue among the various stakeholders who are, in different ways, implicated in the lives and welfare of children and youth.

Further information about the conference is available at the website of the International Childhood and Youth Research Network: www.icyrnet.net

Visit: http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=15529

FICE Congress 2008
11 to 13 June 2008, Helsinki, Finland

The Congress is organised by FICE-International and Central Union for Child Welfare (the Finnish FICE-Member) in collaboration with the Faculty of Social Policy at the University of Helsinki, the City of Helsinki and its Department of Social Services, and the National Research and Development Center for Welfare and Health (Stakes).
Registration is now open! Deadline for registrations: 15 May (early bird price available until 31 March 2008) The final program available on the website www.FICEcongress2008.fi

The Finnish organisers welcome you warmly to share your expertise and experiences in the field of residential care, to meet your peers and colleagues from all over the world and to learn more about different practices and methods available in the field.

The main themes of the FICE 2008 Congress are:
1. Protecting the World’s Children
2. Child, Family and Close Relations
3. Child's Experiences, Right to Participate and to be Heard, Quality of Care

The experts presenting in the plenaries come from UK, USA, South Africa, Finland and Austria. In addition to plenary presentations there will working sessions (workshops, discussion groups, mini-seminars) to take the discussion further on various issues related to residential care and especially to a child’s best interest in residential care.

Please note that the language of the congress is English. Translations into French and German will be provided in the plenaries.

Early Years Internatlonal Conference & AGM
12-13 June 2008, Londonderry, Northern Ireland

Early Years, the organisation for young children in Britain, formerly NIPPA, is organising an international conference on their Annual General Meeting on "Young Children are Eager and Able to Learn". Keynote speakers are Professor Guy Claxton, Professor of Learning Sciences at the University of Bristol Graduate School of Education and Dr. Larry Schewinhart, who is an early childhood program researcher and speaker throughout the United States and in other countries. For more information: http://www.early-years.org/news/events.php

Nordic Research Conference
Call for papers
13-15 June 2008, Lillehammer, Norway

NYRIS10 welcomes papers and presentations that can contribute to new insights, empirical evidence and critical thinking on bonds and communities of young people, as well as other topics. Please submit your abstract no later than 4th February (250 words). For more information on abstract submission, registration, etc see www.nova.no/nyris10 or contact nyris10@nova.no.

Growing up justly!
Education - Integration – Ownership
18-20 June 2008, Essen, Germany

The 13th German Child and Youth Welfare Congress themed “Growing up justly!” will take place on 18 - 20 June 2008 in Essen, Germany. The Congress is characterised by a Conference and an Exhibition that targets institutions presenting the entire scope of child and youth welfare. We invite honorary as well as full time experts and cooperation partners. The exhibition:

• presents conceptual developments and innovative models of child and youth welfare and provides an insight into its common practice
• aims at the common implementation of improved social circumstances for young people
• informs the public about offers, services and tasks of child and youth welfare
• provides a forum for contacts as well as for exchange of experiences and ideas, allows discussion of different points of views
• conducts a dialogue with those responsible for youth policy.

AGJ invites you to present your organisation, products or services in the Conference Exhibition. The exhibition provides the opportunity to network with those directly involved in German child and youth welfare, nationally and locally. Furthermore, organisations from all over Europe are invited. The 13th German Child and Youth Welfare Congress is organised by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kinder- und Jugendhilfe-AGJ (Child and Youth Welfare Association).

For more information: www.agj.de

Sharing Information
Do you wish to share information, announce something or make a contribution to the e-News Bulletin? Please send it to: info@eurochild.org.
Eurochild AISBL is a network of organisations and individuals, who are working in and across Europe to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of children and young people. Our work is based on the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

JOIN US!

Eurochild is open to all organisations from the non-profit sector working in the social field with an interest in the welfare and rights of children and young people in Europe.

Joining the Eurochild network enables members to get the latest information about policy developments at European level, funding opportunities, events, Eurochild activities, cooperate and share best practices with child rights organisations and specialists all over Europe, help to shape EU policies affecting children by participating in the development of Eurochild Policy Positions and Joint Statements, attend Eurochild events at lower fees, and many more!

If you would like to become a member of Eurochild, please send us the application form, which is downloadable from www.eurochild.org, accompanied by the necessary supporting documents!