News from Eurochild

3rd Annual Conference of Eurochild AISBL
14-16 November 2006, Berlin, Germany

The Eurochild/AGJ Conference in Berlin has been a success. It gathered over 120 participants, who had a vivid and interesting exchange on the issues of non-formal and informal learning as a means of tackling social exclusion.

The following General Assembly and Policy Forum was attended by 14 member organisations of Eurochild. On this occasion, Eurochild approved and welcomed two new members: SOS Kinderdorf International (SOS Children’s Villages - Continental Office Western Europe) and the Children’s Rights Alliance from Ireland.

Most of the presentations made during the conference are posted on Eurochild’s web site under http://www.eurochild.org/index.php?id=28&L=0. The final report from the conference will be posted soon on this same page.

News from the European Institutions

EU 50th anniversary logo

Since 13 November 2006 it is possible download the adaptation of the winning logo of the competition "design a birthday logo for EU" in all 21 official languages plus Bulgarian and Romanian from the website http://www.ec.europa.eu/avservices/photo/event_reportage_en.cfm?id=1622. The motivations of the jury that chose the logo can also be found on this page in all languages.
The adaptation of the logo into the other languages has been made by the designer of the logo himself Szymon Skrzypczak, assisted by a crew of design experts, in a way that keeps the original spirit of the creation but also respects the particularities of the different languages.

The logo will be used by the EU institutions to highlight the events celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome in 2007. Member states, regional and local authorities, as well as NGOs, businesses and citizens are invited to use the logo for any event they may organise in connection with the anniversary.

The other best placed proposals can be seen here: http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/50/index_en.cfm

European children discuss Europe live

On 20 November, children from all over Europe joined an online debate on the future of Europe with European Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström, responsible for Institutional Relations and Communication. The event was organised by the European Commission and Save the Children as part of Plan-D and the consultation process for the White Paper on a European Communication Policy.

Five young people from Finland, Lithuania, Romania, Spain and the UK and Margot Wallström debated a wide range of issues such as children’s right to participation and their involvement in EU decision-making, the environment, violence, bullying, children in institutional care, poverty and more. They discussed questions and comments sent in by children and young people from all over Europe. Commissioner Margot Wallström committed to take the views and input from the web-chat into account and to discuss them with her colleagues in the Commission and the other EU institutions.

You can now watch the debate online in one of the EU’s official languages as well as Romanian and Bulgarian here: http://www.managenergy.tv/me_portal/com/viwm300_en/dg_comm_webcast_november_2006.

Save the Children welcomed this web-chat as one step towards an EU that listens and learns from its youngest citizens and will continue its work to promote children’s participation in EU affairs. It is currently preparing a summary of the input received from children and young people on the White Paper on a European Communication Policy. The report, which will be submitted to Commissioner Wallström will be made available on: www.savethechildren.net/brussels

For more information please contact Olivia Lind Haldorsen: olivia-savechildbru@sky.net.be.

10 years of European Voluntary Service

On 26-27 November 2006, the European Voluntary Service celebrated its tenth anniversary. European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a flagship of the YOUTH programme, a Community action that encourages young people to become immersed in a different country and culture, while carrying out a voluntary, not-for-profit or charitable activity.

Aged between 18 and 25 years, EVS volunteers work individually for up to 12 months for example in kindergartens, youth organisations, municipalities, sport associations, etc. or collectively help with the organisation of major European events.

EVS will continue as an Action of the new YOUTH IN ACTION Programme for the period 2007-2013, and it will be considerably expanded: the future EVS will allow people between 18-30 years to participate (in some cases even 16-17 year-olds). It will cover a large range of countries in Europe, the neighbouring regions and the whole world.

More information on EVS: www.celebrateEVS.eu

Stimulating science education

On 27 November the European Commission has announced the creation of a group to look at what action can be taken in Europe to support science education in primary and secondary schools. The group will be chaired by Michel Rocard, former French prime minister and now Member of the European Parliament. The four other members are distinguished scientists with a long lasting experience and a particular interest in science education: Peter Csermely, Doris Jorde, Dieter Lenzen and Harriet Wallberg-Henriksson.

The group will formulate policy recommendations designed to improve the way that Europe approaches science teaching and ensure future generations are properly prepared for a society and economy that relies on knowledge as a driving force.

The Commission is creating this group in response to a growing body of evidence that shows that young people across Europe are losing interest in key science studies. Recent work by the OECD indicates that the number of young people entering university is increasing, but they choose to study fields other than science. Science curricula have become too heavy and fail to put science within its historical and social context. Without this, children’s imagination and observation skills are not properly developed.


‘Violent’ video games

Responding to Commissioner Frattini’s concerns over “violent video games”, the video game industry
has defended the EU's voluntary and independent certification system. The issue was brought into sharp focus on 20 November 2006 when a German teenager stormed his former school and wounded around 32 people with a firearm before committing suicide by shooting himself.

A study, conducted in 2000 by Craig A. Anderson from the University of Missouri in Columbia and Karen E. Dill of Lenoir-Rhyne College, suggested that “exposure to violent video games will increase aggressive behaviour...in both the long and short term”. (for more information on the study: http://www.apa.org/journals/features/psp784772.pdf).

However, the 2005 findings of researchers Dmitri Williams, a professor of speech communication at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Marko Skoric, a lecturer at the School of Communication and Information at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, appear to contradict the commissioner's position and did not support the assertion that a violent game will cause substantial increases in real-world aggression". (for more information on their findings: https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/dcwill/www/CMWilliamsSkoric.pdf).

Commissioner Frattini has recommended a focused informal meeting in the margins of the forthcoming Justice and Home Affairs Council in Brussels on 5-6 December 2006.

European school reform process

Commission Vice-President Siim Kallas, as European Commissioner in charge of European Schools and the 25 ministers of the member states in charge of the same area met on the margins of the Education and Youth Council on 13 November to discuss the European schools reform process. This meeting follows on from the political initiative launched in May under the Dutch Presidency of the European Schools’ Board of Governors and upheld by the current Portuguese Presidency of the Schools to drive the debate forward on the future of a system created 50 years ago to provide high quality education for staff of the EU institutions. The discussions focused in particular on the evolution of the European schools outside Brussels and Luxembourg in the context of the enlargement and of the multiplication of EU agencies, as well as on the educational, administrative and financial management of the schools.

Health, Food, Nutrition and obesity

New Eurobarometer

Most Europeans consider themselves to be in good health, but 38% feel they are overweight, according to the results of the latest Eurobarometer on Health, Food and Nutrition presented by the European Commission on 9 November. The survey, which reveals that 95% of EU citizens agree that obesity is harmful for health, addresses the health and physical characteristics of Europeans, their diet and general eating habits, problems related to being overweight, and their physical activity levels.

The results the survey come as Europe is waking up to what health commissioner Markos Kyprianou called an "obesity epidemic." Focusing on children, the commissioner said there were some 14 million overweight children in the EU with an extra 400,000 joining the ranks every year.

Advertising part of obesity problem

Fearful of being regulated by the EU and prodded into action by public opinion – nine out of ten Europeans believe that advertising influences children food and drink choice – a series of companies recently announced voluntary measures to tackle obesity.

The Confederation of the Food and Drink Industries (CIAA) organised its annual congress on 26-27 October 2006 around 3 themes: food & health, food & consumer and food safety. The congress was not about obesity, but as it is becoming an increasingly hot topic, every speaker of the Food & Health thematic session related its main message, in one way or another, to the subject.

The Commission urged industry not to advertise foods high in fat, sugar and salt to children, as it thinks that advertising plays a key role in determining the choice of what we eat and the image we have of the nutritional value of the product.

Of the measures taken, Kraft has said it will stop selling in primary schools, Unilever has reduced salt and sugar content in its products while the nine companies that are members of the Union of European Beverages Associations have said they will stop advertising to under-12s.

It’s time to tackle childhood obesity

As levels of overweight and obesity in European children continue to rise, it is generally agreed that preventative action is needed urgently. However, there is still much debate over when and how to introduce interventions and what measures should be used.

The message

There are three main aspects of a child’s lifestyle that will make the environment obesity promoting or not: the diet, the level of physical activity and the level of sedentary behaviour, in particular the number of hours spent watching TV and playing computer games. Prevention programmes could provide a simple message and focus on one area like improving the diet or cutting down the number of hours watching TV, or include any combination of diet, activity and sedentary behaviour messages.

Tailoring the message

Apart from the actual messages it may be necessary to tailor the programme to suit the particular children involved. For example the type of sports and
activities offered may need to vary between girls and boys. The age of the children will also determine what is possible and acceptable, many things change between primary to secondary school, not least access to sports facilities and school catering systems. Social class and ethnic differences in diet and behaviour may also need to be taken into consideration. Children who are already overweight or obese may need to be given special help.

Setting

Another key consideration is where the intervention takes place and who is involved. Schools are an obvious starting point because they have access to large numbers of children, have the potential to support healthy behaviour and are ideal for the delivery of health promotion programmes. But the school-based approach may falter if there is lack of support in the family or in the wider community. Thus parents and siblings may also need to be involved in activities perhaps through ‘action days’ or other special events so that there is continuity at home. Taking an even bigger step is to get the whole community involved including those involved in sports centres, community leaders and the food suppliers (food industry, caterers, retailers).

Sustainability

For any programme to be of benefit it needs to be viable in the long term. This means that any infrastructure that is put in place can be sustained with acceptable additional cost and effort. For example changes in a school canteen can be continued relatively easily if they are accepted by the school and catering staff. On the other hand a programme that requires a high level of additional staff or specialist input may be expensive and impractical in the long term.

Paying attention to adverse effects

Ideally such interventions will boost children’s self image, motivate them to follow a healthy lifestyle and help them to achieve and maintain the appropriate weight for their height into adulthood. However, it is important to consider whether an intervention might have any adverse effects on the psychological or physical health of the children. For example it should not cause normal-weight children to lose weight, cause an unexpected increase in fatness or exacerbate any existing self-esteem problems in children who are already overweight or obese.

The way forward

As shown above the possible scenarios in the design of obesity prevention programmes is extensive, but do we know what works? A number of intervention studies have already been carried out using different messages, approaches and social settings. It is now time to evaluate what we have learnt from these early studies and how to go forward. Recent reviews of school-based interventions have started this process (1,2) and in a series of articles in forthcoming issues of Food Today we will be looking at some of the success stories; what they achieved, why they worked and their recommendations for future action.

Malnutrition costs more than obesity

With current policy focus on obesity and decreasing our daily intake of fat, sugar and salt - malnutrition is often forgotten. However, experts say malnourished citizens cost the EU more than obesity.

Malnutrition is a medical condition caused by inadequate or insufficient diet (imbalance of energy, protein, and other nutrients) which can cause measurable adverse effects on health. Chronic malnutrition is caused by children not having enough food and only being able to eat the same kinds of food - mostly carbohydrates like rice and maize - day after day. Because they are not getting all of the nutrients they need to grow, malnourished children are often ill and do not feel hungry.

Chronic malnutrition causes stunted growth and significantly increases the likelihood of premature death. Stunting does not happen as quickly as the rapid weight loss associated with acute malnutrition, but the consequences for children can be just as devastating. It exposes populations to a much greater risk of illness, reducing their ability to withstand infection. Failure to grow and reduced body size also have major long-term impacts on brain development and activity, which leads to poorer performance at school.

In wealthy societies malnutrition, mineral and nutrient deficiencies, is a particular problem of older people. This issue was discussed for the first time at EU level during the Dutch presidency in September 2004. A follow-up conference on the issue took place under the British EU presidency conference in September 2005.

In a conference on ‘From Malnutrition to Wellnutrition’, on 22 November 2006, stakeholders from around Europe discussed ways to pull the issue of malnutrition higher up on the EU agenda. The participants defined actions aimed to build awareness and recognition of the problem especially in the community context, nursing homes and hospitals.

The European Commission will adopt a White paper on EU health strategy in June 2007.


For more information on public health in the EU: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/nutrition_en.htm

[Sources: European Commission, CRIN, European Food Information Council Newsletter, EurActiv.com, EU Observer.com]
EU social-protection expenditure on rise

According to figures published in October by Eurostat, Member states spend more each year to pay for the costs of old age, sickness, unemployment, housing and children.

In 2003, social protection expenditure accounted for 28.0% of GDP in the European Union. However, the percentage share in one country can be more than double that of another. The highest expenditure is in Sweden (33.5%) and the lowest (13.4%) in Estonia and Latvia.

The figures also indicate that high spending on social welfare is not necessarily detrimental to a country’s economic well-being; the EU’s most competitive countries (Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the UK) are all in the top ten in terms of GDP percentage spent on social protection. And the Baltic countries, where poverty is among the EU’s highest, take the bottom position. In fact, the figures seem to indicate that investment in social cohesion is an important asset for boosting a country’s competitiveness.

To download the Eurostat report:

Staying safe on-line

An independent evaluation has found that the EU’s four-year programme (2005–08) “Safer Internet programme”, which promotes safer internet use, particularly for children, has been very effective in tackling illegal and harmful internet content, whilst respecting people’s freedom of expression. Among the main successes highlighted include the setting up of 21 national hotlines to report illegal internet content, and the creation of 23 national awareness nodes to promote safer internet use by children, parents and teachers.

High level of concern over the issue is confirmed by the 534,000 reports received by the hotlines in 2005 alone. Moreover, according to Eurobarometer, 18% of European parents of children aged 17 and younger say their child has encountered harmful or illegal content online. The Commission believes that more support is needed from member states to promote awareness of the hotlines among end-users and to promote better cooperation between hotlines and stakeholders such as the police and internet service providers.

The Commission will take into account the recommendations in its implementation of the “Safer Internet plus” programme for 2007-2008.

On 6 November, the Commission has published two Communications:

- on the implementation of the multi-annual community programme on promoting safer use of the internet and new online technologies (Safer Internet Plus:
- on the final evaluation of the multi-annual Safer Internet Action Plan for the period 2003-2004; see:

For further Information:

The Commission’s Safer Internet plus programme:
http://ec.europa.eu/saferinternet
Hotlines: http://www.inhope.org/
Awareness nodes: http://www.saferinternet.org/
EUKids Online: http://www.eukidsonline.net/
Sipbench: http://www.sip-bench.org

European Parliament

NGOs and MEPs unite to give citizens greater say

Inspired by a provision in the stalled Constitutional Treaty, civil-society groups have called on the EU to give legal force to citizen’s initiatives. The European Citizen’s Initiative (ECI) was launched on 9 November 2006 by a group of NGOs with the support of some Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The ECI wants to give legal force to citizen initiatives that gather one million signatures. According to the initiators of the campaign, European politics could not continue to work “top-down” only, but needed a “bottom-up”-approach.

The Constitutional Treaty, which has been put on ice after its rejection by French and Dutch voters, had already foreseen such an initiative in article 47 of the text. Green MEP Gérard Onesta said that this was a good solution to overcome citizens’ mistrust of European politics, as witnessed during the failed referenda on the European Constitution in France and The Netherlands.

For the European Citizens’ Initiative:
http://www.develop4democracy.org/maineci/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3&Itemid=4

EP adopts service directive

The services directive which aims to facilitate the provision of cross-border services by removing obstacles to the free movement of services in the internal marked, reached its final stage with the EP approving the Council common position with minor changes. The final position adopted by Parliament broadly reflects the Parliament’s first reading position achieving a balance between competition and social protection.

The Services Directive, formerly also known as the Bolkestein Directive, after former European Commissioner Fritz Bolkestein who introduced it, is
described by MEP Arlene McCarthy (PSE) as “the single most important and most disputed piece of legislation in the EU”.

Following public resistance, particularly in France, the Parliament voted, on 16 February 2006 in favour of a revised version of the directive. Following a political agreement at the end of May 2006, the European Council adopted its common position on the directive on 24 July almost unanimously. The common position took most of Parliament’s amendments on board, but changed the wording on a number of the directive’s most disputed issues, which the Council claimed was necessary for legal clarification.

Member States have a maximum of three years to implement the provisions of the directive.


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**News from NGOs**

**10 years of European Youth Forum**

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) celebrated its General Assembly on 9-12 November in Vilnius, Lithuania, with the election of a new leadership for 2007-08, the adoption of Strategic Priorities until 2012 and the adoption of a Work Plan and budget for 2007-08. In addition, it celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Elections were held to elect a new Bureau and President for the 2007-08 mandate, with Bettina Schwarzmayr, currently Vice-President, elected President of the Forum. In addition, a vote on extending the mandate of the current Secretary General, Diogo Pinto, for a further two years was supported by a vast majority of the membership.

Addressing the GA in her closing speech, Bettina noted that “through times of genuine change in the European and global sphere, the Youth Forum - now 10 years old - has proved to be resilient and is building cooperation in the face of division.” She stressed to the delegates present that the YFJ “must not be bystanders but be actors at the forefront of social change.” Adding that “by virtue of its strength, and...diverse membership and resources, the Youth Forum is a very privileged organisation, and this privilege places a large responsibility on the new leadership of the organisation.”

For more information: www.youthforum.org

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**New name for child rights organisation**

International Advocates for Children has decided to pick up a new name as per 1st of October: World Initiative for Orphans. As subtitle: The Global Partnership on Children without Parental Care.

The new name reportedly better reflects the full mission of the organisation.

WIO is an independent, non-profit human rights organisation for orphaned and abandoned children worldwide. It strives to guard the fundamental needs of children who are deprived of the guidance and protection of their primary caregivers by engaging in advocacy, education, problem analysis and the development of solutions based on research that can be applied by countries and NGO’s worldwide. WIO is building bridges between governments, NGO’s and experts from all fields, to develop unity and harmony in finding best practices that work in each region of the world for each individual child.

On 21-24 May 2007 WIO will organise an international conference which will provide an open forum for communication and will identify new approaches and model practical solutions. The goals of the conference are to achieve international cooperation in solving problems pertaining alternative care of parentless children by, among others, promoting the respect of Child Rights.

For more information: www.wiorphans.org

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**News from European States**

**ALBANIA**

Research on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency

The UNICEF Office in Albania and the Children’s Human Rights Centre of Albania (CRCA) have started to work together on a major research project related to juvenile justice and juvenile delinquency in the country.

Albania does not have a system of administration of juvenile justice in place. The number of juveniles in conflict with law is increasing every year and the system is not able to cope with such an increase. Juveniles often face an unfriendly justice system. Although legislation and policy during years has improved, Albania lacks appropriate legislation and policies for the administration of juvenile justice. Most of the juveniles are sentenced with imprisoning, while the application of alternatives to detention is limited.
Sarkozy's youth crime bill

A crime bill that would punish juvenile delinquents harder, faster and younger reached France's lower house of parliament on 21 November, championed by Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy in a bid to stem the violence that plagues the country's neglected suburbs.

The bill could be a sign of the direction in which Sarkozy would take France if he succeeds in his bid for the presidency in elections next spring. It would toughen punishment for offenders as young as 13 and treat 16- to 18-year-olds who commit certain serious crimes more like adult offenders. Its toughest points have been removed, however, amid fears they were unconstitutional.

Sarkozy, who has long pushed a law-and-order platform, says France's current laws on juvenile delinquency - which date to 1945 - are woefully out of date and blames them for an 80 per cent rise in crime by minors over the past 10 years.

Teachers, social workers and parties on the left oppose the bill, saying it impinges on freedoms and doesn't tackle the roots of the anger that led to rioting in troubled housing projects a year ago and still simmers among poor youth, many of them of immigrant origin.

The French Senate approved the bill in September. The lower house, the National Assembly, is expected to make some changes to the bill in debates at the end of November. A vote is expected on 5 December.

For more information:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2353429.stm

http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=11474

New law banning corporal punishment of children

The Council of Europe (CoE) Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, in the beginning of November sent a letter to the Greek Foreign Minister welcoming the recent adoption by Parliament of a law on domestic violence, under which corporal punishment of children has become prohibited. Greece became the 15th European country to have legally banned corporal punishment - a move which was described by the Strasbourg-based CoE Commissioner as a "significant milestone".

The Greek Ombudsman (Department of Children's Rights) noted that some members of the consultative committee on this piece of legislation - made of governmental and NGO participants - were disappointed that the new law did not incorporate the term "corporal punishment". However, an explanatory report issued to Parliament made it clear that the more general term "physical violence" did include corporal punishment.

The Greek law will come into force on 24 January 2007 and will form the basis of a public education campaign aiming to raise awareness of the need to end corporal punishment in parenting. The law's adoption had been prompted by Greece's violation of article 17 of the European Social Charter.

Ban on junk-food sales in Latvian schools

Latvia is the first EU country to ban the sale of soft drinks, candy bars, potato chips and chewing gum in schools and kindergartens. The prohibition of sales of food, drinks and snacks containing artificial additives such as colouring and flavouring agents, preservatives, amino-acids and caffeine, entered into force to sell in Latvian public schools on 1 November 2006. This ban, voted by the Latvian government on 23 August 2006 as part of the country's drive to improve children's diets, also covers foods containing excessive levels of salt and sugar.

School shops and cafeterias will therefore no longer be able to sell sodas and confectionary or salted crisps. However, pupils can still bring and eat them in school but teachers are asked to encourage them to not to do so. The prohibited products will be replaced with "healthy alternatives" such as dried fruit, unsalted nuts, unsweetened fruit juice, wholegrain snacks, mineral water and milk.

Latvia's move illustrates current pressure on the soft drink and snack industry to restrict the availability of their products to children. In a similar trend, French authorities are removing vending machines from their schools. Industry does not believe that banning the sale of these products is the right way to promote a healthy diet and, instead, suggests more information and education on a balanced diet.

As childhood reaches worrying proportions in many countries, the EU Platform for action on diet, physical activity and health is developing recommendations for solutions on, for example, how to motivate young people towards healthy lifestyles.
UK

Doctors call for debate on mercy killing of disabled babies

Doctors are calling for a debate over proposals for the “mercy killing” of severely disabled babies. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists wants a discussion over whether “deliberate intervention” to cause death should be legalised. Withdrawing treatment is already permitted in some cases. The college said it was not necessarily in favour of the move, but felt it should be debated. However, some are angry it has even been suggested.

The College made its comments in a submission to the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, which is carrying out an inquiry into the viability of life. Nuffield will publish its report on critical care decisions in foetal and neonatal medicine next week. A working party has been consulting on the issue on the back of improvements in medical technology which means very premature and ill babies can survive, although some with severe disabilities.

Doctors have mixed views over the suggestions.

For more information: http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=11096

Antisocial Behaviour: Families helped by intensive scheme

A two-year research project into intensive family support schemes has concluded that they are effective at tackling antisocial behaviour and can save large amounts of money in the long term.

The researchers, from Sheffield Hallam University, calculated the cost per case in 2003-04 was between £3,954 and £5,991 for projects without housing, and £4,913 to £12,940 in 2004-05 for projects with residential units.

The study, Antisocial Behaviour Intensive Family Support Projects, found that a family with three or four children, evicted from social housing for antisocial behaviour, can cost the state between £250,000 and £330,000 a year. It concludes the projects offer “excellent” value for money.

Hugh Thornbery, director of children’s services in the West Midlands at charity NCH, which runs five of the six projects, said: “You can see a return on investment very quickly.”


Visit http://www.childpolicy.org.uk for the latest on child policy matters across the U.K.

Universal Children's Day 2006

In 1954, the UN General Assembly recommended that all countries institute a Universal Children's Day, to be observed as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children. It recommended that the Day was to be observed also as a day of activity devoted to promoting the ideals and objectives of the Charter and the welfare of the children of the world.


The UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence Against Children (www.violencestudy.org) was launched in Geneva on the occasion of the Universal Day of the Child, also celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Committee on the rights of the child and 17 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This launch marked the publication of the book: 'World Report on Violence Against Children', which complements a shorter report that was presented at the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly on 11 October 2006 in New York. The purpose of this event was to discuss follow up to the Study with NGOs, young people, representatives from governments and UN Agencies.

UN Resolution on the Rights of the Child

Every year, the UN General Assembly (GA) hears updates on the situation of children’s rights and adopts a resolution based on them. This year’s Resolution focused on children living in poverty who had no access to nutrition or sanitation facilities. The GA heard reports from the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, on the follow-up to the Special Session on Children, and on the Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

As Professor Pinheiro, Independent Expert leading the Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children, had presented his final report to the GA, a section of the Resolution is dedicated to violence against children. Even though the Resolution does not specifically reflect all of Pinheiro’s recommendations, the GA says it ‘welcomes the Study and takes into account its recommendations’.
Even though the Study Report recommends the appointment of a Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Violence Against Children, the GA does not make any decisions on this issue, but invites Professor Pinheiro to ‘give support to the first year of effective follow-up to its recommendations […] to submit to the General Assembly at its 62nd session a report on progress made in the initial phase of the follow-up and to anticipate the necessary strategy for follow-up to the implementation of the study’.

Both the NGO Group Subgroup on Children and Violence, and the NGO Advisory Panel to the Study have been campaigning for such an advocate to be appointed by the GA, referring to the establishment of the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict as an outcome of Graça Machel’s report.

Finally, the General Assembly requested that next year’s resolution should focus its section on ‘Violence against Children’.

To download the resolution: http://www.crin.org/docs/GA_Resolution2006.pdf

For a World fit for Children

European governments who signed up to the ‘World Fit for Children’ agenda more than four years ago are being reminded to involve and consult with children if their pledge is to remain credible. A call to action to those governments, made in Italy on 15 November, also praises efforts by the European Union to make children a priority – but insists that mechanisms must be put in place to ensure the strategies are implemented. The comments marked the end of a meeting co-hosted by UNICEF and the European Children’s Network, Euronet, which gathered representatives from civil society organisations, UN agencies and European governmental bodies in Florence for two days of dialogue.

The ‘World Fit for Children’ pledge was signed by 180 nations at the 2002 UN Special Session on Children. It outlined 21 specific goals and targets for the next decade, focusing on four key priorities:

- Providing quality education for all,
- Promoting healthy lives,
- Protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence,
- Combating HIV/AIDS.

In anticipation of a progress report to the UN General Assembly on the fifth anniversary of the pledge next year, the meeting in Florence gave non-governmental organisations an opportunity to help review achievements in Europe since 2002 – and to identify the challenges.

The Council of Europe’s project, ‘Building a Europe for and with Children’, was praised for involving young people in its work and put forth as a possible model to be shared with nations outside Europe. Similarly, the Children’s Ombudsman’s Network was widely viewed as a significant advance.

For more information: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/italy_36593.html

WHO European charter against obesity

Health and consumer NGOs have welcomed the signing of a World Health Organisation European Charter on counteracting obesity by European Ministers on 23 November in Istanbul. The Charter pays special attention to vulnerable groups such as children and adolescents, and agrees that European governments shall adopt regulations to substantially reduce the extent and impact of commercial promotion of energy-dense foods and beverages to children.

In addition, it recognises the importance of an international code on marketing to children, due to the robust evidence that shows clear links between television advertising and other forms of marketing and eating behaviour. The Charter also calls for adequate nutrition labelling. This must be translated into the provision of mandatory nutrition labelling and harmonisation of front of pack simplified labelling throughout the European region.

The Charter represents political commitment by European ministers to concrete actions to tackle the escalating rates of obesity. The health problems caused by excess weight lead to a wide range of debilitating and life-threatening conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

European Public Health Alliance: http://www.epha.org/

UN writing competition for children

The UN has launched a writing competition for children on Human Rights and Poverty. This is one of the activities being organised for the upcoming Human Rights Day on 10 December 2006. The competition is a joint initiative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the UN Department of Public Information (DPI), with assistance from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ Division for Social Policy and Development. Human Rights Day 2006 will focus on Fighting poverty as a matter of obligation, not of charity.

The Human Rights and Poverty children’s writing competition gives students between the ages of 8 to 18 the chance to share their thoughts on how to tackle poverty and protect human rights. In case you know any teachers (or students) please feel free to pass on the message. The deadline is 10 December. The writing competition is open to all six official UN languages (English, French, Spanish and Russian - Arabic and Chinese to come soon).

To find out more about the competition and its rules at: http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/index.shtml
**Further Reading**

**Report on universal birth registration**

A new report published by [Plan International](http://www.plan-international.org) on Universal Children's Day reveals that at present, no records exist of the birth of six of every ten babies born in South Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa the births of 55% of all children go unrecorded every year. The report argues for a global response to the issue of unregistered children. Plan is now pushing for the establishment of international guidelines for achieving universal birth registration. These would ensure better coordination and create much-needed political commitment. For more information: [www.plan-international.org](http://www.plan-international.org)

**Roma Children in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia i Herzegovina**

Extreme poverty, discrimination in schools, and the lack of truly inclusive and multicultural curricula prevent Romani children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia from enjoying their right to education. [Amnesty International](http://www.amnesty.org)'s latest report focuses on the exclusion of Romani children from primary education in these three countries and on the failure so far of the governments to address their needs. For more information: [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

**Young children, HIV, AIDS and gender**

The [Bernard van Leer Foundation](http://www.bernardvanleer.org/publication_store/publicationstore_publications/young_children_hivaids_and_gender_a_summary_review/file) has published a new issue of its Early Childhood Development working paper series. *Young children, HIV/AIDS and gender: A summary review*, explores how to use the early years to lay the foundations for HIV/AIDS prevention. The paper aims to kick-start a debate on an under explored issue: ways in which attitudes towards gender that are inculcated in the early years can play a significant role in creating behaviours in later life that influence the spread of HIV and AIDS. To download the working paper: [http://www.bernardvanleer.org/publication_store/publicationstore_publications/young_children_hivaids_and_gender_a_summary_review/file](http://www.bernardvanleer.org/publication_store/publicationstore_publications/young_children_hivaids_and_gender_a_summary_review/file)

**ILO study on youth unemployment**

The number of unemployed youth aged 15-24 rose over the past decade, while hundreds of millions more are working but living in poverty, according to a new report published by the [International Labour Office](http://www.ilo.org) (ILO). While the number of young unemployment increased from 74 to 85 million (by 14.8%) between 1995 and 2005, more than 300 million youth, or approximately 25% of the youth population, were living below the US$2 per day poverty line. To download the report: [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/download/gety06en.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/download/gety06en.pdf)

**Calendar of Upcoming Events**

**Council of Europe seminar on fighting poverty and social exclusion**

4-5 December 2006, Trento, Italy

How can public authorities, citizens and the media cooperate to combat poverty and social exclusion? This is the aim of a seminar co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Autonomous Province of Trento, Italy, to be held on 4 and 5 December. In the framework of the European dialogue platform on ethical- and solidarity-based citizen initiatives to combat poverty and social exclusion - promoted by the Council of Europe - the seminar will bring together representatives of public authorities at local, regional, national and European levels, parliamentarians and representatives of NGOs and citizen associations. For more information, visit [www.coe.int/platform](http://www.coe.int/platform)

**Social Platform Conference on “Social Values and Democracy”**

5-6 December 2006, Brussels, Belgium

The conference [Social Values and Democracy: Renewing the guiding principles of the European Union](http://socialplatform.org/code/EN/about.asp?Page=772) will explore the European social model and address two key questions: Social values in EU politics: Are we moving forwards or backwards? and Would the EU be more social if it were more democratic? The plenary sessions will give an overview of this debate and a series of workshops will be organised by Social Platform members on specific themes of relevance to the debate around the European social model. The diversity of Social Platform’s member organisations will spur a highly informed debate from different perspectives. For more information: [http://socialplatform.org/code/EN/about.asp?Page=772](http://socialplatform.org/code/EN/about.asp?Page=772)

**Seminar on the right to education for all**

8 December, Brussels, Belgium

Today, 12 years after the signing of the Salamanca Declaration by more than 300 participants representing 92 countries, not a lot of the ideas have been put into practice yet. Therefore, 3 years before the 15th anniversary of the agreement of this important document we want to make a first state of play and gather ideas on how we could come closer to putting the principles into practice. On 8th December the European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities (EASPD) would like to invite you to our seminar on the right to education for all in order to examine the state of play of implementation of the Salamanca declaration and
to discuss the proceedings with all stakeholders. For more information: http://www.easpd.org/pdf/EntitlementtoEducationProgramme.pdf

HeadsUpScotland 2nd annual conference
12 December, Falkirk, Scotland
This conference is about helping to share and find out about some of the work underway in this area. It will among others: raise awareness of political and practical ideas, projects and programmes which promote mental health and well being, provide a platform to inspire those working in the field to embed and sustain this work, enable the voice of young people to be heard about issues affecting their mental health, re-invigorate commitment and enthusiasm for this work. It will give the legates the opportunity to: enhance knowledge & understanding of mental health in policy and practice, explore ideas, projects and programmes that can be replicated, listen to and enter into dialogue with a delegation of young people about mental health, network with other practitioners. 
On-line booking: www.childreninScotland.org.uk/iii.

Course on Child Rights, Classroom and School Management
The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) is a government agency responsible for the major part of Sweden's development cooperation. As part of its bilateral development assistance, Sida is offering Advanced International Training Programmes of strategic importance to the social and economic development of cooperating countries based on their identified priorities and needs. In co-operation with Lund University a programme covering Child Rights, Classroom and School Management has been developed. The right to, in and through education will be the guiding principle in the course and the whole training programme has a child rights based approach. This programme is also designed to give opportunities to compare and share experience with participants from other countries while taking into consideration the Convention of the Rights of the Child, Education for All and other internationally agreed declarations. Application deadline is 15 January 2006. For more information: http://www.education.lu.se/sida/child

Conference on Quality in the lives of young children
8-10 February 2007, Dublin, Ireland
The 2nd Conference of the Centre for Early Childhood Development & Education (CECDE) will be hosted by the Irish Department of Education and Science on 8-10 February 2007. It will look at policies and practices as agents for change and their impact on the lives of young children. It is aimed at practitioners, policy makers, parents, academics, students and anyone with interest in early childhood care and education. Its aim is to share information and experiences of practice, discuss and debate current research findings, exchange innovative policy approaches and network with others who are committed to making a positive contribution to provision of quality early childhood experiences for all children. For more information: www.cecde.ie

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
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 UN CRC.
If you would like to become a member of Eurochild AISBL, please visit our website www.eurochild.org.

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