News from Eurochild

Upcoming Events

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

As previously announced, the Child and Youth Welfare Association (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kinder- und Jugendhilfe – AGJ, www.agj.de) in Germany and Eurochild AISBL (www.eurochild.org) are organising a European conference on “Policy and Practice for Social Inclusion of Children and Young People - the Role of Non-formal and Informal Learning”, which will take place on 14-16 November 2006 in Berlin, Germany.

For registration (deadline: 10th October 2006) and the full conference programme, please go to the Eurochild website: www.eurochild.org.

Secretariat

During September, two new interns have started working with Eurochild. They will be supporting the work of the secretariat until the middle of December.

Hiromi Amano comes from Japan. She has studied Humanity/Cultural Sciences in Tokyo and holds an MA in Theory and Practice of Human Rights from the University of Essex, UK. In 2002 Hiromi has been working with children in a Cambodian orphanage supported by an NGO. In Brussels she has already made an internship with an MEP, ATD Fourth World and European Schoolnet. She is currently looking at the progress reports of EU member states which
have recently been submitted to the UN Committee on the rights of the child from a perspective of child poverty and social exclusion. This work will help to support Eurochild's analysis of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion and Social Protection this year.

Alexandra Nekrasova is Russian. She holds a degree in translation and is currently doing a diploma in law at the French speaking university in Moscow. Alexandra has already been working as freelance journalist, interpreter and translator, and has made internships at two universities in Italy. She has just put the translation of the Eurochild website www.eurochild.org into French on-line (please don’t hesitate to have a look if you are familiar with this language!) and will be supporting us with the organisation of the annual conference in Berlin in November.

You can reach them via intern@eurochild.org.

As you might have noticed, two of the contributions to the “News from the United Nations” section of our last e-News Bulletin have been written by Ryan Meliak from Malta. He is currently working as a translator at the European Council in Brussels. However, his Masters’ thesis has been a comparison of the progress reports of 3 Mediterranean countries (Malta, Egypt and Morocco) to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in comparison with NGO reports to the Committee – an area with which he would not like to lose touch. This is why he will now regularly be contributing to our information bulletins concerning these issues.

We would like to thank all three of them for their help!

---

News from the European Institutions

Quality education in the EU

In a Communication adopted on 8 September, the European Commission stresses the need for European education and training systems to be both efficient and equitable if they are to achieve the necessary quality to help create more growth, jobs and social cohesion. The process of modernising education and training systems in member states is largely driven by the search for greater efficiency and cost effectiveness. Whilst efficient systems are a pre-requisite for success, the Commission argues that efficiency does not have to come at the expense of equity, and proposes four main areas for action by the Member States:

- Member States should invest more in pre-primary education,
- Member States should not separate pupils into educational ‘tracks’ at too early an age,
- Contrary to what is often assumed, entirely state-funded, “free” systems of higher education do not guarantee equitable access and participation,
- Member States need to develop a ‘culture of evaluation’.


Consultation on healthy diets and physical activity

The Commission on 11 September presented the results of a public consultation on promoting healthy diets and physical activity, with a focus on the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases. With around 14 million children in Europe currently overweight, of which more than 3 million are obese, this is now an urgent public health issue requiring co-ordinated action at EU level, as well as within member states.

The consultation was launched with the publication of a Green Paper on tackling obesity “Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases” on 8 December 2005 which put forward a number of different policy options for the consideration of stakeholders across Europe. Given the complexity of the issue, most of the over 260 contributors call for a multi-sector approach, involving action and coherence across EU policies. Many contributors also call for special attention to be paid to children and youth where fast increases in obesity are being observed. There were also calls for better consumer information on nutrition.

The Commission will present a Communication on healthy diets and physical activity in 2007.

Contributions of stakeholders to the Green Paper:

For more information on nutrition & physical activity:
http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/nutrition_en.htm
Update on Open Method of Coordination

Key networks funded by the Community Action Programme to combat poverty and social exclusion, such as Eurochild, regularly meet with staff from the Social Inclusion Unit of the Directorate General of the European Commission, responsible for Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities. During the last meeting, the Commission provided an update on the latest developments within the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on social protection and social inclusion and future plans.

Concerning the current round of National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008, the European Commission reported that only a few member states sent in the documents by the deadline of 15th September. These are now available on the website: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/naps_en.htm.

The plan is to present a first draft Joint Report, deriving from the 25 national reports, to the Social Protection Committee on 16 November. The joint report should be finished in mid-December and afterwards the procedure for adoption will be launched. The final approval by the Committee will be in January 2007. Eurochild is going to contribute to this report through its analysis of the national reports from the point of view of child rights and child poverty.

2007 will be a “light year” in terms of national reports – a new 3-year cycle will begin in 2008. The European Commission will therefore recommend to the Social Protection Committee, that the theme of child poverty is addressed as a priority within their activities of 2007. They propose a combination of peer reviews and studies, and perhaps a questionnaire to be sent to EU member states to collect evidence of their priority issues and the different policy responses. In parallel, a task force of the sub-group on indicators will be presenting a proposal for a child-well being indicator (or set of indicators). The network of independent experts on fundamental rights is also likely to prepare a report on children in poverty by summer 2007.

Direct involvement of National Parliaments in EU policy initiatives

Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission, informed the Chairpersons of the EU Affairs Parliamentary Committees (COSAC) about the Commission’s decision to start the direct transmission of its documents to the national parliaments from 11 September.

On 10 May 2006, the Commission took up a commitment to transmit its new proposals and consultation papers directly to the national parliaments, inviting them to provide their comments so as to improve the process of policy formulation. The early warning initiative reflects national MPs’ growing ambitions to play a stronger role in overseeing EU legislation. At present parliamentarians tend to raise the alarm only at a stage when the legislation is already too far down the Brussels the lawmaking machine.

However, Barroso’s “strengthened partnership with national parliaments” will give MPs the right to receive Commission proposal directly, but not a formal right to oppose them. With the European constitution being on ice, the question of review of law proposals is not on the agenda. Brussels will only “take note” of national parliamentarians’ wishes. In its reply to comments from national MPs, the commission will “reiterate the goal of its proposals” but not offer “new arguments.”

INTI Call for Proposals 2006 launched

INTI (Integration of third country nationals) is a European Union (EU) funding programme for preparatory actions promoting the integration in the EU member states of people who are not citizens of the EU. Its aim is also to promote dialogue with civil society, develop integration models, seek out and evaluate best practices in the integration field and set up networks at European level. The 2006 INTI CALL for PROPOSALS is published, with the deadline of 20 October 2006 for the submission of proposals. Projects to be co-financed under the INTI Preparatory Actions 2006 should be in line with the Commission Communication ‘A Common Agenda for Integration’ and with the Council Conclusions on a common agenda for integration. The projects should therefore be based upon proposals for putting the Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration in the European Union in practice at EU level.

The documents related to this call for proposal, are available here: http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/inti/funding_inti_en.htm.

European Parliament

Adoption of Daphne III Programme

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) overwhelmingly voted to approve €125 million in EU support over the next six years to help organisations that tackle violence against children, young people and women in Europe. The money is vital, as according to German Socialist MEP Lissy Gröner (PSE, DE), who drafted the report, “a mere 17% or so of the projects submitted to date have received funding” under the “Daphne” programme.

This initiative, launched in 1997, supports organisations to fight against violence, including: fighting domestic violence, supporting victims of trafficking, contribution to the prevention of inter-ethnic violence in schools and integration of help to neglected and abused children. Efforts to widen Daphne to include the fight against drugs were refused as it would be too wide a mandate.
The 'European dimension' in national education programmes

The European Parliament's education and culture committee highlighted the importance of including issues concerning the 10 new member states who joined the EU in May 2004 (EU10) in the national education programmes of the 15 "old" EU member states (EU15), to offset any lack of information due to decades of post-war division.

The Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education has adopted a non-binding report on support measures to include the 'European dimension' in school curricula. The Committee wants EU national education systems to ensure that their pupils have, by the end of their secondary education, the necessary knowledge and competences to prepare them for their roles as future EU citizens. Teaching geography, history and foreign languages in particular "grant considerable status to the European dimension in education," the Committee believes.

The report states that current national initiatives on the issue lack "visibility, accessibility, adequate tools and co-ordination" at EU level. It recommends assisting the teachers on how to incorporate the 'European dimension' into lessons. The Committee also proposes teaching at least two foreign languages to children from a very early age and highlights the importance of ensuring universal access to information on the 'European dimension', particularly for teachers. It also suggests organising student, teacher, information and project exchanges between the EU10 and the EU15.

For the draft report:

EP Committee on Culture and Education:

A European Social Model for the future

The European Parliament (EP) has adopted an own-initiative report on a European Social Model (ESM) for the future. Supporting this model, the report outlines the concept of the ESM which reflects a common set of values implemented in different ways in the Member States. The EP underlines the urgent need for the concept to be reformed and stresses what has to be done in future to preserve the model.

The ESM is not a cost, but a positive factor in the EU's economic growth, says the report as it "reflects a common set of values, based on the preservation of peace, social justice, equality, solidarity, the promotion of freedom and democracy and respect of human rights". MEPs underline that even if employment and social policy remain broadly within national competence, the EU needs to create an economic and social framework which allows member states to implement reforms as necessary at national level, according to their own economic, social and political circumstances. They call on the European Commission and the Council to develop an approach that is better balanced between economic coordination on the one hand and employment and social protection policy on the other.

For the report:

Row over the European Parliament seat(s) continues

On 21 September, MEPs have handed the European Commission a petition of more than one million signatures calling for an end to the "travelling circus" to and from the Strasbourg seat of the European parliament - but the EU executive has said there is very little it can do about it. There is little the commission can do as the official seat in Strasbourg has been enshrined in the EU treaty since 1992 with any revision requiring unanimous approval of all member states.

The online petition www.oneseat.eu was launched in May and reached the one million mark on 18 September. It took up an article in the now-shelved EU constitution which obliges the commission to consider an issue if a petition of at least one million EU citizens asks for it.

The European Parliament's constant move between its two seats in Brussels and Strasbourg is estimated to cost the taxpayer around €200 million a year. Several suggestions have been made for what the parliament seat in Strasbourg could be used for. A research university has been one popular choice, while some say the building - which stands empty 307 seven days a year - could be used for when EU leaders or heads of state meet for their bi-annual summits.

Fundamental Rights Agency

Legal dispute could delay setting up FRA

MEPs are poised to support the EU fundamental rights agency (FRA) - to be set up next January - but insist the new body should also tackle justice and police-related issues, which some governments are opposing. The agency is supposed to replace the existing European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC, http://eumc.europa.eu) in Vienna at the beginning of 2007, but some insiders
suggest this plan could be delayed due to remaining
divisions among national capitals.

Under the compromise deal between the parliament
and the council - representing the member states -
the new body will make recommendations on the
human rights records in EU member and accession
countries on the basis of its own research. However,
it remains unclear whether these should cover
issues involving legal and police co-operation which
are governed exclusively by member states and not
by EU community laws.

Kinga Gal, a Hungarian centre-right deputy and
author of the report on the subject which was voted
on 13 September argues "It would be ridiculous to
have an agency which would ignore cases such as
trafficking of women and children." Her view is
shared by various human rights activists.

While EU leaders have already agreed to the
creation of the agency, if not how it should function,
some MEPs remain strongly against the body
arguing it will duplicate the activities of the Council
of Europe. The 46-member strong council has a
primary role in the protection and promotion of
human rights in Europe, with some of its officials
expressing concern earlier this year about a possible
overlap in agendas. Responding to this criticism, the
parliament and member states have agreed that the
agency should strike some kind of "memorandum of
understanding" with the Council of Europe.

General European News

Study on citizenship in schools

According to a study by Eurydice (an information
network on education in Europe) on pan-European
citizenship education in European schools, two
thirds of countries have schools with strong
coverage of EU integration and its institutions. The
history of European integration and the functioning
of the European institutions are specifically covered
in around 20 countries (mainly at secondary level),
says a study. The study, which covered 30
European countries, looked into issues such as how
pupils are being prepared for their role as
responsible European and world citizens.

Further points include:

- The majority of countries take account of the
  European dimension in their in-service teacher
  training, but only eight officially recommend its
  inclusion in initial teacher education.
- Teachers have opportunities for participation in
  foreign exchanges or study visits within
  European programmes.
- Europe is more present in secondary education
  than primary education curricula.

In the former communist bloc, preparing young
citizens for constructive participation in national and
European society is one of the main aims of the
educational reforms implemented since 1990.

For more information: www.eurydice.org

Key challenges for education systems
identified

The annual Education at a Glance - OECD
indicators 2006, published in September, provides
statistics on the performance of education systems in
the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-
operation and Development). The indicators cover
everything from the investment in financial and
human resources to access to education, learning
environments and organisation of schools.

This year's report identifies four challenges facing
the OECD countries' education systems: Quantity,
linked to the increase in the demand for better
qualifications; Quality, linked to the pressure of
global economic competition to answer to the fast-
growing demand for high-level skills; Equity, the
social background playing an increasing role in
determining a student's performance in countries
such as Germany, France and Italy, and; Ambition,
as indicators suggest a lack of ambition in many
OECD countries, mirrored in poor educational
outcomes and aspirations.

The report highlights inequalities in access to
learning as the biggest concern in the EU.
"Europeans from difficult socio-economic
backgrounds don't receive the same educational
opportunities as children from rich and middle-class
families," it states. The data suggests, in fact, that "in
many countries, European schools reinforce existing
socio-economic inequities." In Germany, for
example, children in white-collar families are four
times more likely to go on to higher education.

A separate OECD study, the Programme for
International Student Assessment (PISA), is an
international assessment and comparison of
students' performances in OECD countries. France
refuses even to publish PISA's evidence on social
inequality between schools, whereas Finland, the
top performer in the PISA studies for the two last
consecutive years, has less than 5% variation in
student performance between schools.

To download the Report:
http://www.sourceoecd.org/upload/9606061e.pdf

For more information on the OECD: www.oecd.org

Internet in EU’s schools

Surfing the web as well as virtual communication
and training methods are becoming more and more
a daily experience in Europe’s school. A European
Commission survey published on 29 September shows that most European schools now have the high-speed "broadband" internet connections they need to access speedily high-quality content. However, there are still important variations from one Member State to another, from about 90% of schools in Scandinavian countries, in the Netherlands, Estonia and Malta - to under 35% in Greece, Poland, Cyprus, and Lithuania. In the US, 95% of public schools had a broadband connection in 2003.

For the survey: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=2888

European Year of Equal Opportunities for all in 2007

Events and activities marking the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All will take place all over Europe in 2007. There will be European level events, such as the Equality Summit at the end of January, but national coordinators will be responsible for organising the vast majority of events and activities in their countries.

Almost all 25 EU Member States have now nominated a ministry or equality agency as their national coordinator. These coordinators, known as 'implementing bodies', will take the lead in organising events at national, regional and local level. They will also be the key contact point for anyone in a country who wants to get involved. Any trade union, NGO, school or individual wishing to host an event or contribute in some way can contact their national coordinator for advice and support.


News from European States

ESTONIA

Dubbing of Astrid Lindgren’s "The Children of Noisy Village"

Three children from SOS Kinderdorf International’s Children’s Village Keila in Estonia have given their voices to dub the three main characters in the film “The Children of Noisy Village” into Estonian. Thirteen-year-old Merilin, eleven-year-old Tanel and seven-year-old Mari spent two weeks in the sound studio learning how to convey the cheerful stories from the Swedish village idyll in the correct tone, with the right pitch of voice and expressiveness.

There will be a strong media presence at the premiere of the Estonian version of “The Children of Noisy Village”, because only a handful of films are translated into Estonian. Mari and Merilin were even invited to appear on a national television show to talk about their experiences in the sound studio. The three young people are naturally proud of what they have done. All three can hardly wait for the premiere, when they will see the results of their work in the cinema.

A winner of many international awards, four years after her death, Astrid Lindgren is still the most well-known children’s authors in the world. Translated into more than 70 languages, stories such as those about Pippi Longstocking, “Karlsson on the Roof”, “Emil of Maple Hills”, “The Brothers Lionheart” and “Ronia the Robber’s Daughter” have stolen the hearts of children across the world. Next year, SOS Children’s Villages Sweden will start a campaign with Astrid Lindgren’s family to mark the 100th anniversary of her birth, which will see the construction of an “Astrid Lindgren SOS Children’s Village” in Africa.

[from SOS Children’s Villages Newsletter, September 2006]

FINLAND

One in four Finnish children witness abusive behaviour at home

According to the Finnish broadsheet Helsingin Sanomat, more than one in four Finnish children witness either abuse of intoxicants or violence within their family home. The newspaper reported that abuse of intoxicants affected more than one in six families, and domestic violence was experienced by approximately one-fifth of all Finnish families.

Family welfare researcher, Mirjam Kalland, noted in an interview with the newspaper that many thousands of children born into such families fail to receive help. For example, in the Helsinki region only 5-6% of children are supported through child welfare programmes, despite the fact that 20-30% of children in the region live in conditions of high risk.

The research conducted by Ms Kalland studied the backgrounds of over 200 children in care.

[source: Helsingin Sanomat, Finnish News Agency STT]

FRANCE

Bill on Delinquency Prevention

The French Minister of Internal Affairs Nicolas Sarkozy presented a bill on Delinquency Prevention in June 2006. Juvenile delinquency in France has risen 80% in the past 10 years, Nicolas Sarkozy said on 13 September, trying to convince lawmakers to back his bill that would strengthen and adapt the law for young offenders. Sarkozy dismissed a 1945 law on juvenile delinquency as out of date and said a drugs law was so severe that no one applied it.
Nicolas Sarkozy’s bill would move cases involving juveniles more quickly through the justice system, rather than let them languish as often happens now, and provide what the minister said was a more suitable response to offences. Among other things, the bill would institute a procedure of “immediate presentation” before a children’s judge for those aged 16 to 18, cutting a minimum delay of 10 days currently. Mayors would head a Council for Rights and Duties of Families that would propose various options for troubled youths.

Social NGOs and other organisations, however, have been opposing the bill since the very beginning. They are against the “social control” and “family policy” which they see in the text. A petition has already collected 200,000 signatures to say no to this reform.


UK
A New Approach to Children in Trouble

The age of criminal responsibility should be raised as part of a fundamental shift in tackling youth crime according to a report by Rob Allen, who has just completed a maximum of two four year terms as a member of the Youth Justice Board, and who has advised the government on youth justice, published last week by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies at King’s College London (www.kcl.ac.uk). From Punishment to Problem Solving: A new approach to children in trouble says government policies are demonising and criminalising young people rather than addressing the reasons for their behaviour.

The report highlights the fact that children are criminalised in England and Wales at a much younger age than in many other countries, including France, Germany, Canada and Russia. The age of criminal responsibility should be raised from ten to 14 with child care proceedings used for children below that age who commit serious offences. The author calls for a move away from the world of ‘cops, courts and corrections’ towards an emphasis on meeting the health, educational and family difficulties which lie behind so much offending. The report sets out a reform package to overhaul the youth justice system.

For more information: http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/rel/ccjs/index.html

Youth Voice Roadshows

UNICEF UK will be holding three Youth Voice roadshows this year: one in Bristol on 25th of November, one in Leeds on 10th December and one in Edinburgh on 20th January.

The Road Shows are free local events for young people aged between 11 and 18. They are intended to engage young people in international issues that affect children’s rights and UNICEF hopes to inspire and empower them to act as young campaigners and fundraisers through a series of information and training workshops. There is a strong emphasis on peer education and on the importance of young people being heard and having influence on the issues that are important to them.

For more information: www.unicef.org.uk

UK faces serious obesity problem

This year’s Health Survey for England, published by the UK Department of Health in August, focuses on obesity. The Forecasting Obesity to 2010 report predicts the levels of obesity in England in 2010 if current trends remain unchanged: One third of adults and a fifth of children will be obese by 2010. Around 13 million adults, more men than women, will be obese and another 15 million overweight. As a result, an increasing number of people will suffer from obesity-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease or type 2 diabetes and the cost of obesity to the UK national health system is expected to rise above 1 billion euro. Childhood obesity is also set to increase, with proportionally more girls than boys being obese.

UK Prime Minister Tony Blair appointed, in August 2006, a Public Health Minister to work across government on a new strategy to increase the UK population’s fitness and activity levels.

Striving to promote healthy lifestyles, the European Commission adopted, in December 2005, a Green Paper on healthy diets and physical activity in Europe to prevent obesity and chronic diseases. A White Paper on the issue is expected in early 2007. The Finnish Presidency expert conference on ‘Health in All Policies’ in September 2006 will have a special plenary session on nutrition and physical activity.

[source: www.euractiv.com]

Legislation on child abuse in the UK

On the tenth anniversary of the Stockholm World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, ECPAT UK – the leading children’s charity with a mandate to combat child sex tourism - launches a groundbreaking report exposing gaps in legislation and policy for protecting vulnerable children from British sex offenders who travel abroad. The report exposes how dozens of British nationals have been arrested or convicted abroad in the last five years for the sexual abuse of children. Some of these offenders have gone to great lengths to set up orphanages or schools with the specific aim of abusing children. Money to support these orphanages was raised in the UK.

ECPAT UK is calling on the government to address the growing problem of British offenders who are avoiding detection in the UK by living abroad. The report brings attention to the recent death of a British national in Thailand who had been charged for child sexual abuse. At the time of his death he had been...
living in Thailand for many years following serious allegations about child sexual abuse by London social services. Thai police believe he had sexually abused at least 300 children in Thailand in this time.

For more information: www.ecpat.org.uk

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

SWITZERLAND

UN condemns vote to detain failed asylum-seekers

On 25 September 2006 Switzerland has voted to impose tough new laws authorising the detention of failed asylum-seekers and cuts to would-be immigrants’ welfare benefits in a national

Council of Europe News

New treaty on Child Sexual Exploitation

The second meeting of the Committee of Experts on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse (PC-ES) took place at the Council of Europe (CoE) in Strasbourg from 11-13 September. On this occasion the CoE has begun to prepare a new treaty to effectively protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse by reinforcing national measures and cross-border cooperation.

For more information on the Protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Legal_Affairs/Legal_co-operation/Fight_against_sexual_exploitation_of_children/

Empowering Children in dealing with the Internet

The Council of Europe has called on its member states to make information technology an integral part of school education from an early age, to help children maximise benefits and avoid pitfalls of the Internet and other new technologies. Recommended measures include giving children the skills to create, produce and distribute content in new technologies, respecting the rights and freedoms of others while also promoting their own right to freedom of expression.

The recommendation calls for member states to ensure that these skills enable children to better understand and deal with questionable content, including violence, pornography, discrimination and racism.

Filtering and labelling Internet content is not enough to ensure that children and young people can surf the web safely - in the exercise of their rights and freedoms, including the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas.

Children and young people need to be, and to feel, empowered when using the Internet, so they can competently use its tools and services and critically analyse Internet content and communications. By equipping them and their educators with appropriate skills and knowledge, they will be able to exercise their rights and freedoms fully and responsibly, to improve their development and well-being online.


For more information: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/media

"All different - All equal"
European Youth Event for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation

400 representatives of youth organisations from all over Europe gathered in St Petersburg on 21-25 September to assess the role played by young people in building a Europe without dividing lines, to foster dialogue of cultures and religions through non-formal youth education, to discuss their participation in decision-making process and to pool experience regarding the protection of human rights and young people’s rights and overcoming discrimination.

The European Youth Forum is being held in connection with the Council of Europe’s “All different - All equal” Campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation. It is also part of the programme of the Russian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers (May - November 2006).
“All different - All equal” is a political campaign run by young people in the 49 countries covered by the Council’s Cultural Convention. The aim is to mobilise young people behind a message - that all people, everywhere, have the right to be themselves and to be treated with fairness and justice.

For more information: [http://alldifferent-allequal.info](http://alldifferent-allequal.info)

**European Day of Languages**

On 26 September 2006 the Council of Europe has marked the 6th European Day of Languages in its 46 member states. The event, which was established by the CoE following the success of the European Year of Languages in 2001, aims to alert the public to the importance of learning languages throughout life, as well as at school. The Council of Europe website for the Day illustrates some of the initiatives undertaken across Europe to promote language learning and to celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity: [www.coe.int/EDL](http://www.coe.int/EDL)

On the same day, the European Commission adopted a Decision to establish a High Level Group on Multilingualism. The Group, comprising 11 experts from across Europe, will meet formally for the first time on 3 October 2006. It has been set up in response to the 2005 Communication “A new framework strategy for multilingualism”, which called for a high level group to advise the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism on the “development of initiatives, as well as fresh impetus and ideas for a comprehensive approach to multilingualism in the European Union”. For more information on languages in the EU: [http://europa.eu/languages/](http://europa.eu/languages/)

**United Nations News**

**Committee on the Rights of the Child**

**Day of General Discussion on Children’s participation**

Over 30 children and young people from around the world gathered at the United Nations in Geneva on 15th September to make their voices heard at a meeting of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. It is the first time such a large number of under-18s are able to participate in a Committee meeting.

Every year the Committee, the body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), organises a discussion day on a theme related to children’s rights. The aim of the discussion is to give states advice on how to implement the rights being discussed.

This year’s discussion was on the child’s right to be heard which is expressed in **Article 12 of the UN CRC**. As well as children, the event is bringing together Committee members, NGOs, UN agencies, governments and other interested experts to identify priority issues, share good practice and issue recommendations.

The Committee will issue its recommendations to governments on the child’s right to be heard shortly. It will also endeavour to draft a General Comment on the same theme next year.

Eurochild was represented at the Day of General Discussion by Catriona Williams, President, and Maarit Kuikka, Executive Board member.

For more information on the day of general discussion: [http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/discussion.htm](http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/discussion.htm)

**Elections 2007**

The **Committee on the Rights of the Child** is composed of 18 independent experts with recognised competence in the field of human rights. Members are elected for a term of four years by States parties in accordance with article 43 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Members serve in their personal capacity and may be re-elected if nominated.

The next meeting of States parties will be held at the United Nations in New York in February 2007 to elect members to replace the nine current members whose terms expire on 28 February 2007.

A Fact sheet on the nomination and election procedures and the role that NGOs can play in these processes has been prepared by the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child: [http://www.crin.org/docs/NGO_Group_elections_fact_sheet.doc](http://www.crin.org/docs/NGO_Group_elections_fact_sheet.doc)

For more information on the Committee on the Rights of the Child: [http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm](http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm)

**UN Study on Violence released**

**Recommendations on the prevention of violence against children**

The independent expert in charge of leading the UN global Study on Violence against Children, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, has released his final report, which will be presented at the General Assembly 61st session on 11 October 2006. The report provides a global picture of violence against children and proposes recommendations to prevent and respond
to this issue. It provides information on the incidence of various types of violence against children within the family, schools, alternative care institutions and detention facilities, places where children work and communities. The report will be accompanied by a book providing a more detailed account of the Study.

The Study was prepared through a participatory process which included regional, sub-regional and national consultations, expert thematic meetings and field visits. Many Governments also provided comprehensive responses to a questionnaire transmitted to them by the independent expert in 2004. Significant contributions were also made by regional bodies and intergovernmental bodies, as well as from United Nations entities, civil society organisations and children.

For the study: [www.violencestudy.org](http://www.violencestudy.org)

**NGO call to UN ambassadors and permanent representatives**

Members of an international NGO advisory panel for the study made the following recommendations for action to ambassadors and permanent representatives to the United Nations:

- Strong endorsement and follow-up
- Request the appointment of a Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Violence against Children


**Launch of child-friendly materials**

The Study will also be launching child-friendly materials, along with the SG’s report and the book "World report on Violence against Children". The materials are currently being printed and will be produced as a joint package, containing the child-friendly version of the report and the Educational Materials. The Educational Materials titled ‘Our Right to be Protected from Violence: Activities for Learning and Taking Action for Children and Young People’) are action-oriented and provide activities that can be used to help young people learn about the issue and ideas for taking action against violence.

**Joint Statement on Children’s Rights**


It says among others:

"Whilst conscious of the need to mainstream children’s rights into the entire human rights system, we feel that children have specific needs and concerns that necessitate the adoption of an explicit children’s rights focus by the Council. The World Conference on Human Rights, in its 1993 [Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action](http://www.crin.org/docs/JS-OMCT.pdf), reiterated the principle of “first call for children” and stated that “the rights of the child should be a priority in the United Nations system-wide action on human rights”. Thus the [Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)](http://www.crin.org/docs/JS-OMCT.pdf) should be highlighted in the work of the Council. We very much hope that the Council will accept its commitment to child rights in its future sessions by ensuring that the agenda includes a separate point dealing with child rights.

This statement is our call for action by the Council on four specific child rights issues:

1) violence against children
2) sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
3) children affected by armed conflict and displacement and
4) children in conflict with the law."

For the full statement: [http://www.crin.org/docs/JS-OMCT.pdf](http://www.crin.org/docs/JS-OMCT.pdf)

**Call for protection of unaccompanied children**

On the eve of the UN General Assembly debate on International Migration, Save the Children demands that more be done to protect children who migrate alone who are extremely vulnerable to physical, sexual and labour exploitation.

Children make up a large proportion of international migration flows. Exact figures are impossible to ascertain due to the underground nature of the problem but there is little doubt that numbers are on the increase. Globally unaccompanied children make up 4% of the total number of asylum seekers. This figure does not include those who have migrated undetected, either alone or by organised criminal gangs.

Save the Children calls on governments to address poverty and education in areas from where children migrate, as well as ensuring that children have access to appropriate care in destination countries. There is also an urgent need for appropriate and sensitive treatment of children when they are caught and repatriated. Proper systems need to be in place to return children safely to their families and
Children in the Justice System
Call for children to review new UN guidelines

UNICEF is calling for children and young people to review the first draft of the child friendly version of the UN Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime.

Working with children or adolescents who have been affected by or witnessed a crime is an important responsibility. In order to help people do this well, the United Nations developed a specific document. These Guidelines are meant to give children and adolescents the opportunity to help in solving the crime and bringing those who committed it to justice. They also explain how to protect children's rights and wellbeing during the process.

The child friendly version of the UN Guidelines was developed to help all children understand what their rights are if they've been affected by crime. It is especially meant to let those who are in this situation know what they should expect from the adults helping them and from the justice system (police, courts, etc.) in their country.

The best way to improve the child-friendly version is to get the views of young people themselves. Currently UNICEF is collecting comments and suggestions on how to make the document better. They will also translate this improved version into many other languages, and make them all available on a CD and the Internet.

For the guidelines: http://www.crin.org/docs/unicef_child_fr_justice.doc

Further Reading

Report on Child trafficking in SEE

Prevention efforts in South Eastern Europe (SEE) are failing to protect children from falling prey to traffickers and have relied too much on general awareness-raising, says a report released by UNICEF and Terre des Hommes. The report Action to Prevent Child Trafficking in South Eastern Europe – a Preliminary Assessment examines different strategies and initiatives to prevent child trafficking in SEE and includes the voices of child victims from several countries where the research was carried out. The report calls for the establishment of harmonised, synchronised and seamless systems and services – both internal and cross-border – to protect children. It stresses the obligation in this regard on states and on parents, guardians and professionals who interface with children under the UN CRC and other relevant instruments. For more information: www.unicef.org.

MDG: Progress on Water and Sanitation

Safe water is fundamental to human life, yet more than 1 billion people do not have access to it. Another 2.6 billion live without basic sanitation. Under Millennium Development Goal 7, the world has pledged to halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to these essential services by 2015. In a new report released on 28 September – Progress for Children No. 5: A Report Card on Water and Sanitation – UNICEF assesses the results of efforts since 1990 to expand access to safe water and basic sanitation worldwide. The report’s conclusions on global progress toward MDG 7 are mixed, with impressive achievements made but much more work needed to prevent 1.5 million child deaths each year. For more information: www.unicef.org

European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics 2006

This report compiles statistics, comparative data, analysis and definitions concerning crimes committed in Europe. Due to the ensuing enlargement of the European Union, the necessity for such periodic assessment and comparison in crime and criminal justice has become even more apparent. The assessment of trends in crime and criminal justice has been a permanent concern of the Council of Europe and other international organizations. Due to ongoing developments in Greater Europe and the ensuing enlargement of the membership of the Council of Europe, the necessity for such periodic assessment and comparison in the above mentioned areas had become even more apparent. To download the report: http://www.wodc.nl/eng/Onderzoeken/Onderzoek_416.asp

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS


World Health Organisation: OzonAction education Pack: Reducing the health risks for children from ozone layer depletion

International Institute for Child Rights and Development: Through the Eyes of Young People: Meaningful Child Participation in BC Family Court Processes


European culture and science at a click

By 2008, European citizens should be able to access books, films and other cultural products via Europe’s Digital Library. Since welcoming the proposal first suggested in April 2005 by six heads of state and government to the EU Presidency, advocating the creation of a virtual European library, the Commission has laid down guidelines to ensure that the digital libraries initiative is a success.

Digital libraries are organised collections of digital content made available to the public. They can consist of material that has been digitised, such as digital copies of books and other ‘physical’ material from libraries and archives. Alternatively, they can be based on information originally produced in digital format, an increasingly popular storage method for scientific content. Both aspects – digitised and originally digital material – are covered by this initiative.

An online consultation will deal with some of the major challenges influencing digitisation, online accessibility and digital preservation. Replies will be an important input for a possible proposal for a Recommendation on digitisation and digital preservation and will feed into other relevant Community initiatives such as the review of the copyright framework.

For more information:

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Amnesty Award: Protecting women and children’s rights - call for nominations

Amnesty International USA’s “Ginetta Sagan Award” recognises and assists women who are working to protect the liberty and lives of women and children in areas where human rights violations are widespread. The 2007 award will be given to a woman who works on behalf of the human rights of children. The creation of the Ginetta Sagan Fund emphasises that more human rights work must be done by and for women. The $10,000 award is announced and presented each year at the Annual General Meeting of Amnesty International USA. Nomination deadline: 16th October 2006. For more information:
http://www.amnestyusa.org/ginettasaganfund

Peer Reviews in social inclusion in 2006

The Peer Review Programme is a voluntary mutual learning process involving the scrutiny of specific policies, programmes or institutional arrangements presented as good practice in the various National Action Plans on social protection and social inclusion. It consists of a series of peer review sessions, in which the experience of the host country is confronted with the comments and critical analysis of peer countries and other stakeholders, including NGOs. Upcoming Peer Review sessions:

- 23-24 October: Spain: Social integration of Roma people. Municipal programme of shanty towns eradication in Avilés (Asturias)
- 6-7 or 13-14 November: Netherlands: Amnesty of debts: a legal solution to over indebtedness
- 4-5 December 2006: Sweden: Financial coordination within the field of rehabilitation

Consultation of Child Helpline International
1-4 October 2006, Stockholm, Sweden

The Third International Consultation of Child Helpline International (CHI) will take place on 1-4 October 2006 in Stockholm, Sweden. The helpline movement has chosen to make this Consultation an event of networking with one another, networking with international children’s networks and organisations, participatory thematic workshops and plenary sessions with international experts. The registration fee is 550 Euro, covering conference, hotel accommodation for three nights, meals, field visits, sight seeing and transfers. Registration on-line at the following website: www.chistockholm.org.

Round Table on Poverty & Social Exclusion
16-17 October 2006, Tampere, Finland

The 5th European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion under the Finnish Presidency will take place on 16-17 October in Tampere. The
Conference aims to provide an opportunity for a broad-based European discussion on the prevention and eradication of poverty and social exclusion. The Round Table is one of the main European-wide occasions where politicians and representatives from NGOs, national/regional/local governments as well as European institutions can exchange their views and learn from each other’s approaches. Representatives of Caritas, Eurochild, ESN, FEANTSA and RETIS will be funded to represent their networks or NGOs during the event. For more information on the Round Table: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/conf_en.htm

World Conference on Children without Parental Care
23-26 October, The Hague, NL

The 3rd annual World Conference on Children without Parental Care is going to take place on 23-26 October in The Hague, The Netherlands. It is organised by International Advocates for Children (IAC), a non-profit organisation whose mission is to vigorously advocate for human rights of orphaned and abandoned children worldwide. The objective of the conference is to create an active forum of discussion and debate amongst participants from all over the world. This “Symposium for Enforcing the Human Rights of Orphaned and Abandoned Children” will host up to 100 countries, represented by officials, NGO’s and scientists. That is why participation is limited per country. Pre-registration forms must be received by 30 April 2006. For more information: info@iachildren.nl

Conference on Juvenile Justice in Europe
24 - 25 October 2006, Brussels, Belgium

The 2nd International Conference of the International Juvenile Justice Observatory, entitled 'Juvenile Justice in Europe: A Framework for Integration', will take place in Brussels on 24-25 October 2006. The subject matter of this conference is based on the challenge of promoting a reflection about a major harmonisation of legislation and common ways of action in prevention, treatment and integration policies, regarding young people in conflict with the law. For more information: http://www.oijj.org.

Children in Scotland’s Annual Conference
2-3 November, Cumbernauld, Scotland

Ahead of the 2007 Scottish Parliament election, Children in Scotland’s annual conference ‘A gift for life? Building better childhoods for Scotland’s children’ will consider the progress made to date and future priorities in building better childhoods for Scotland’s children and young people. The two-day event will consider how we can improve children’s experience of childhood and lay the basis for their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing throughout life. Registration fees are between 180£ and 390£, depending on the chosen formula (residential/non-residential) and the membership status of the organisation with Children in Scotland. On-line booking: www.childreninscotland.org.uk/gfl.

Conference: Emotion Literacy for children
3 November, Edinburgh, Scotland

The conference on ‘Implementing and Embedding Emotional Literacy - 4 Approaches for Success’ will discuss Implementing and Embedding Emotion Literacy in to a variety of settings to help children. It will be a chance to see some of England and Scotland’s good examples of embedding and using Emotional Literacy in a range of settings and schools. During the workshops it will be possible to work with the actual practitioners who have been there and are doing it. The participation cost is £150 + VAT per delegate and it is possible to book online at www.schoolofemotional-literacy.com.

Conference: non-formal & informal learning
14-16 November, Berlin, Germany

The next Annual Conference of Eurochild AISBL will take place on 14-16 November 2006 in Berlin. It is co-organised with Eurochild AISBL’s member organisation in Germany, AGJ (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Jugendhilfe). The title of the Conference will be: “Policy and Practice for Social Inclusion of Children and Young People - the Role of Non-formal and Informal Learning”. For more information, see: www.eurochild.org.

Conference on Challenges for Children’s Rights
18 November 2006, Sion, Switzerland

The conference ‘Challenges for Children’s Rights’ will be a forum for sharing ideas between researchers, professionals, staff and students from diverse children’s rights programmes on the future directions and challenges in the interdisciplinary study of children’s rights, as well as on recent developments in the international legal and social arenas pertaining to children’s rights. The Conference is meant for professionals, researchers and students involved in children’s rights. For more information: www.iukb.ch

Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse
19 November 2006

Alerting Governments and civil society organisations to play a more active role in the promotion of and respect for the rights of the child and contribute to the prevention of child abuse, the Women’s World Summit Foundation (WWSF) launched in 2000 the World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse, a Day to be commemorated every 19 November in synergy with the anniversary of the International Day for the rights of the child (20 November) which has as its objective to be a rallying point around the issue of child abuse and the need for urgent effective prevention programmes. For more information: www.woman.ch
Symposium on Juvenile Justice & Conference on Compliance Programmes with Legal Measures  
Cordoba, 27-28 & Seville, 29-30 November 2006

The Department of Justice and Public Administration of the Regional Government of Andalusia and the non-ludicrous organization Meridianos (which manages programmes for young people regarding abidance with legal measures adopted) are organizing these scientific/technical conferences aimed at promoting a deeper knowledge on legal frameworks concerning juvenile conflicts and a search for professional, psychosocial, educational, working and environmental solutions to mitigate the impact of this problem stemming from modern societies. For more information: www.meridianos.org

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.

Conference on Quality in the lives of young children  
8-10 February 2007, Dublin, Ireland

The second International Conference of the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) will be hosted by the Irish Department of Education and Science on 8-10 February 2007. This conference 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 Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the heart of our activities lies the Child Poverty Programme.

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

Editor: Jana Hainsworth - Responsible for publication: Anja Härtwig

Eurochild
Rue de la Concorde 53  
B - 1050 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 511 70 83  
Fax: +32 (0)2 511 72 98  
e-mail: info@eurochild.org  
Internet: www.eurochild.org

Eurochild AISBL is funded by the European Commission under the Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion 2002-2006. This e-News Bulletin reflects the author's view and the Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.