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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to issue two of Euronet's newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you informed of Euronet’s actions and membership and to brief you on relevant developments in the European Union and the member states' policy with regard to children. The newsletter also aims to be a means of communication between NGOs at national level. Therefore, you are invited to report any initiative at national level which is relevant to Euronet’s area of work, preferably by e-mail “savechildbru@skynet.be”. For information on the contents and the distribution of the newsletter please contact Mieke Schuurman on the address above.

This issue contains a report on the Belfast Conference and on the first regional seminar which was held in Spain. There is also news on the freezing of several social and development budget lines.

News from the ‘Children are European Citizens too’ Campaign

The campaign ‘Children are European citizens too’ aims to develop and promote a dynamic European policy for children in conjunction with NGO partners in 15 EU member states and to develop and implement a strategy for an EU agenda for action. The campaign is receiving financial support from the European Commission (DG V). National and regional organisations and decision makers can contact Mieke Schuurman to get involved in the campaign.

The ‘Children as Citizens of Europe’ Conference - Belfast.

On 28 and 29 May 1998 Euronet co-organised with the Irish organisation Focus on Children the ‘Children as Citizens of Europe’ Conference in Belfast. This conference was held in the framework of the UK Presidency. More than 150 children and adults from about 10 different EU Member States took part in the conference. Among them were MEPs, politicians, policy makers, academics and representatives of children’s NGOs.

The young delegates started the first day by laying a paper on the chairs of the participating with their wishes. In this paper they wrote for example “this is our conference - listen to what we have to say” and “we don’t have the vote but we do have opinions”. During the conference there were many opportunities for both children and adults to participate and express their views. On both days workshops were given by children and adults on education, the importance of play for children, separated children, arts activities, the participation of young people. Also a workshop was given by MEPs and one by Euronet. In this way children and adults were mixing and a good atmosphere between them was created.

EURONET IS FUNDED WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION DG V.
On the second day there was a question time panel with Lyndon Harrison MEP, Alex Smith MEP, Angela Guillaume, an ECOSOC member, and Anthony Simpson from the European Commission. The young people asked questions such as why they could marry at the age of sixteen and have a job, but not be able to buy a drink at their own wedding. They wanted to be treated equally with adults and have voting rights. They also raised the issue of minimum wages. They did not want to be divided into a category below the age of 18 and a category above the age of 18. The panel advised them to unite children’s organisations in Europe and influence public opinion by campaigning together.

At the end of the day the children presented their own Agenda for Europe to Adam Ingram, representing the UK presidency, and to Ewald Filler, who represented the Austrian Presidency, which takes over from the UK in July.

One of the main conclusions of the conference was that children’s voices want to be heard, not only at this one occasion but more often. “They urge politicians and policy makers of their Europe and countries to take action to promote and protect children’s rights and treat them equally and with respect”.

Copies of “a Children's Agenda for Europe” as well as a briefing for the Belfast Conference by Euronet’s researcher Sandy Ruxton are available in English and Spanish from Mieke Schuurman at the Euronet office (details at the first page of this newsletter).

Defining the European Agenda for Children: The Regional Seminars

Report of the Southern European Seminar in Spain

On 22 June the first regional seminar took place in Madrid. About 50 persons participated with among them participants from Portugal, Italy, academics and policy makers and Ana Terron MEP from Spain. A lot of coverage was given by the press, in national and regional newspapers but also on tv and at the radio.

In the morning the theme ‘Children as European Citizens’ was discussed. Among others the concept of European citizenship was challenged. The question was raised what the function of European citizenship is. Since nationality identifies with a certain State, while citizenship is something more and is the result of the integration of the EU. In the European Union citizenship fulfils a dual role of nationality and citizenship in a nation state in Spain. Regarding nationality and other rights a recent case before the European Court of Justice was ruled. The Court of Justice concluded that a Member State can impose conditions regarding residency for the maintenance of family benefits where the beneficiary has ceased all professional activity in that Member State and has moved to another country. (Ref. Ruling C-275/96, June 11).

Recommendations and conclusions which came out of the morning session were:

- Existing human rights conventions should be implemented and the rights of all children in Europe should be promoted.
- Children from third countries are European citizens too and should be treated accordingly. Regarding a Council resolution on this and following the European Year Against Racism more should be done in the EU on this issue.
- Children’s participation should be encouraged more. This could be done by means of transnational exchanges of local good practices. Examples in Spain are local laws on children, local children’s councils next to the city councils and programmes for new fathers and mothers which teach them the rights of their children which they acquire from birth onwards.
- The EU harmonisation of the minimum working ages should be enforced by the Member States. In this respect the best interests of the child need to be taken into consideration and working children must be consulted on decisions which affect them.
- The European Observatory on Family Policies should write a report with a focus on children.
- Lower birth rates and changing demography figures and its implications need to be addressed by the European Union.

During the afternoon session ‘children as consumers and their need for special protection’ was discussed. Experts from the European Commission, the Spanish Consumers’ Institute and from the ECOSOC gave an introduction on this issue.

Conclusions and recommendation which arose from this session were:

- The European Union should concern itself with child pornography and abuse and child sex tourism and increase its legal co-operation on these issues. In this respect the functioning of Europol, which has a
two year intergovernmental initiative on this issue, should be investigated as well as the involvement of NGOs in this respect.

- Children should be included in EU consumer legislation, this could be done by establishing a child proof criterion in EU consumer legislation.
- The new article 153 in the Amsterdam Treaty should be used as a legal base for warning systems on unsafe products and the internet.
- A European network of consumers needs to be set up which will educate children on consumer issues and which has to force public institutions to take up their responsibilities regarding the protection of children as consumers.
- Good practices between the member states should be promoted.

Concerning the child as consumer a recent case in Greece is of interest. Greece has introduced restrictions by law since 1994 on the televised advertising for toys. Between 07.00 and 22.00 hrs televised advertising of toys is banned. According to the European Commission these measures have led to a 40% fall in sales on the Greek market of toys imported from other EU Member States. The Greek authorities claim that the ban is necessary to protect minors. The Commission wonders if the measures are not excessive in relation to the goal sought. The Commission is now investigating this Greek law by consulting experts and interested parties and looking at alternative measures applied in other Member States before she decided whether or not to continue proceedings against Greece. This is a clear case of a Member State which takes into consideration the best interests of the child as a consumer, while the European Commission has to balance this against the possible harm of this Greek law to EU competition law.

Update on the Other Regional Seminars

For more information on the organisation of the regional seminars you can contact the Euronet co-ordinator or the organising organisation.

- The French regional seminar which is organised by BICE France will be held on 25 September in Paris. Partners from Belgium (Wallonia), France and Luxembourg will be invited to the seminar. The theme of the seminar is ‘The Protection of Children at European level’. This covers the protection of children from sexual exploitation and abuse, the tv and media regulations and children as consumers, the regulation of the internet, children in the family and the freedom of movement in the European Union. For more information contact the co-ordinating organisation: Christine Benaïm at BICE France, 70, Boulevard de Magenta, 75010 Paris, Tel: +33 1 53 350100, Fax: +33 1 53 350119, e-mail: “bice@club-internet.fr”.
- On 2 October 1998 the Austrian organisation Rettet das Kind will organise a seminar in Vienna with the theme ‘The Participation of Children in Europe’. This theme has been taken up by the Austrian Presidency of the European Union. The partners from Germany, the Netherlands and Greece will participate in this seminar. For more information contact: Dieter Wesenauer at Rettet das Kind, Pouthongasse 3, A-1150 Vienna, tel. +43/1 982 62 16, fax: +43/1 982 46 64 17, e-mail: “rettkind@magnet.at”.
- The Northern European seminar, open to NGOs and decision-makers from the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Finland and Denmark will take place in London in October. An exact date has not yet been fixed. The theme of this seminar will be ‘Social Exclusion of Children in the European Union’. For more information contact: Bill Bell at Save the Children UK, 17 Grove Lane, UK-London SE5 8RD, tel: +44 171 7035400, fax: +44 171 7035760, e-mail: “b.bell@scfuk.org.uk”.

Experts meeting of Euronet

On 17 July the first of the two experts meetings took place to give input to Euronet’s project ‘Children are European citizens too’. Experts from Portugal, Italy, the UK and Belgium with all different specialities and Euronet’s researcher Sandy Ruxton participated in the meeting. The structure of the report for a Children’s Agenda was discussed and ideas were given on how to proceed with the contents of the report. Themes can mainly be dealt with according to the division of the subjects in the European Commission. As a red thread the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with as four principles participation, best interest of the child, non-discrimination and the survival of the child will function. Next to the contents of the report also other ways of collecting information was discussed. Among others this will be done by interviews with EU officials in Brussels and with interviews with national policy makers. Euronet’s partner organisations will be asked to carry out the national interviews. The final report will be ready at the beginning of 1999 and then be presented at a conference in Brussels.
Input from the National Partners
This section provides information on what the partner organisations are doing. FUNCOE, a Spanish member organisation of Euronet is writing about the Spanish Children’s Platform:

NEWS FROM THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

Freezing of social budget lines and support letter by Brian Crowley

Following a Court of Justice case on the funding of social exclusion which ruled that this funding had no legal basis, the European Commission decided to block all lines without a legal basis. Among them were three lines affecting children. The only way to solve this problem was an agreement between the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. Euronet asked its member organisations to write to their ministers and national and European MPs, which was done by most member organisations. Euronet talked with MEPs and Commission officials in Brussels on this matter.

We also had a talk with the budget rapporteur on social affairs for the 1999 budget, Brian Crowley. He was very supportive of the continuation of funding for children in the 1999 budget. He wrote a letter to children to ask their support as well......

On 17 July the trilogue between Commission, European Parliament and the Council of Ministers took place and an agreement was reached for the lines without legal basis. There is now a possibility for pilot projects for 2 years and preparatory actions for 3 years. After this period a legal basis needs to be established. In view of the Amsterdam Treaty which will probably be ratified by all member states at the end of 1999, there are possibilities to create programmes with children included on the basis of the new Treaty. In the mean time pilot projects and preparatory actions for children can be submitted to the European Commission.

European Observatory on National Family Policies

On 9 and 10 July the European Observatory on National Family Policies meeting of national experts took place in Brussels. The Observatory was established at a Council meeting on 29 September 1989 with as main task to provide “regular information on demography, and measures concerning families (household structures, female employment rates, trend in birth rates, etc)”. The European Family Observatory is funded by the European Commission and was recently based in the offices of the Austrian Institute for Family Studies in Vienna. The Observatory is a network of fifteen national experts in family policies and a co-ordination team based in Austria. Euronet was invited to attend the meeting as observer.

In the meeting a paper prepared by the Observatory on the themes and problems to be dealt with by the Observatory during the next years was presented. A new area the Observatory wants to focus on is the impact of national family policies on children, since there is a new tendency in European countries to see children as subjects and to give them a voice in decision making. This development is supported by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implementation in the various national contexts.

The director of the Observatory is the Austrian Helmut Wintersberger. He is an expert on children in the EU and would like to give children a separate place on the agenda of the Observatory. In the 1996 report of the Observatory one chapter dealt with children. According to Helmut Wintersberger there is a need for more specific chapters on children, but also for children as a special focus in other general sections, such as employment. In addition, more statistics are needed on childhood which take children as a focus next to family statistics.

The next seminar of the Observatory together with Senior Commission officials will take place on 13 and 14 October. The intention is to have also a specific seminar on children the next few years.

Address of the observatory is: European Observatory on National Family Policies, Gonzagasse 19/8, A-1010 Vienna, Austria, tel: +43 1 535 14 54 26, fax: +43 1 535 14 55, e-mail: “helmut.wintersberger@oif.ac.at”. A website will be established to disseminate information on the Observatory.

EURONET THEMES

Intervention BICE at the International Criminal Court Congres

At the Congres on the International Criminal Court in Rome BICE Italy made an intervention pleading for the elaboration of a children’s policy. The rights of the child as laid down by treaties and other international
instruments need to be respected and implemented. BICE also pleaded for the participation of children. In this respect all EU countries should co-operate as well as Eastern European countries. BICE mentioned Euronet as a good example of this co-operation. The co-operation of NGOs on the issue of children’s rights is necessary to make the International Court of Justice to defend their rights.

ECOSOC Conference “Children First”

On 22 June ECOSOC organised a conference “Children First” in London. Euronet was asked to speak on its work and on child abuse at this conference. Other themes at the conference where child exploitation, child neglect in the family and society in general, child labour and the role of Europe in all these issues. Euronet was asked to co-operate with ECOSOC on how to take children’s issues further. The next ECOSOC meeting on children will be in Austria.

A European Human Rights Agenda

Currently, a European Human Rights Agenda for the Year 2000 is prepared by a ‘Comité des sages’. The preparation is co-ordinated at the Academy of European Law in Florence. Euronet has asked to include children’s rights in the European Human Rights Agenda in general in the thematic studies such as European citizenship as well as in the whole section on the role of key institutions and actors. In addition, Euronet has asked to consider a thematic section devoted specifically to children. The Agenda will be presented at a conference in Vienna under the auspices of the Austrian Presidency of the EU on 9 October.

(Daphne Programme)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

• 25 September 1998: Paris
  Regional Seminar of Euronet organisations from France, Luxembourg and Belgium.
• 2 October 1998: Vienna
  Regional Seminar of Euronet organisations in Austria, Germany, Greece, Belgium and the Netherlands.
• 3 October 1998: Montecatini, Italy
  Seminar on “The family with a suffering child”, organised by BICE-Italy.
• October 1998: London
  Regional Seminar of Euronet organisations from the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Denmark.
• 16-23 November 1998: Italy
  “The Week of Communication between Adults and Children”, which includes a series of initiatives by the member organisations of the Italian BICE network.
• 17-20 November 1998: Braga, Portugal
  International Congress on Child Social and Cultural worlds organised by The Institute of Child’s Studies from the University of Minho
• 26 November 1998: Austria
  Youth Council of Ministers

LIST OF EURONET PUBLICATIONS

• Treaty briefing (on the Amsterdam Treaty) in English, French and Spanish
• A Proposal and Invitation: Building a Europe with and for children, in English, French and Spanish.
• The Single Market - What is in it for Children?, in English
• Active Voices, Children’s Choices - Children as Citizens of Europe by Sandy Ruxton (researcher Euronet): a Discussion Document, in English
• A Children’s Agenda for Europe, outcome of Belfast conference, in English
• Newsletter of the International Save the Children Alliance: this newsletter gives more information on European issues for children as well as EU development policy related to children. It is produced once per month, in English, French, Spanish and on e-mail.
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This newsletter is available in English and French and on e-mail. Euronet partners are encouraged to translate the newsletter in their own language or highlights of it. The Spanish member organisation Funcoe has done this for a number of existing Euronet publications. If you are translating the newsletter please let the Euronet coordinator know. Could you also inform her about any national initiatives which are planned. These can be included in the newsletter.

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