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Euronet project funded with support of the European Commission

EURONET WEBSITE:
HTTP://EUROPEANCHILDECRENNETWORK.GLA.AC.UK
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to issue nine of the Euronet, the European Children’s Network, newsletter. Its purpose is to keep you informed of Euronet’s actions and membership and to brief you on relevant developments in the European Union and member states’ policies concerning children. The newsletter also aims to be a means of communication between NGOs at national level. Therefore, you are invited to contribute articles on any initiative which is relevant to Euronet’s work, either by phone (+32 2 512 4500), fax (+32 2 512 6673) or e-mail “savechildbru@skynet.be”. This issue contains a section on two new projects Euronet is working on. One project is a children and youth project and the other one concerns the discrimination, social exclusion and participation of children. Furthermore, the newsletter includes news on the Convention drafting the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Convention has announced that it will include a specific article on children’s rights in the Charter. Commissioner Diamantopoulou indicated that the issue of child poverty will be included in the Commission’s forthcoming social inclusion programme. Defence for Children/The Netherlands, Euronet’s Dutch member organisation presented a report on combating sexual exploitation of children to the Vice President of the European Parliament. If you have questions, ideas or remarks about the newsletter or if you would like to receive the newsletter by email, please contact Mieke Schuurman at the address above.

NEWS FROM THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: a Specific Article on the Rights of the Child

Euronet has been actively engaged with the process of drafting of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Euronet submitted proposals to the Convention, which drafts this Charter. Euronet welcomed the fact that the Convention in its draft of 15 February considered including a reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, Euronet also remarked that the reference to children should be wider than “The Union shall ensure protection of children” and also include the promotion of the rights of the child. In response to a submission from Euronet the draft of 8 March the Convention mentioned including a specific article on the rights of the child. Euronet has drafted a text for this specific article and welcomes the inclusion of a specific article for the rights of children.

The texts that Euronet has submitted to the Convention have all been placed on the website of the European Council: http://ue.eu.int/en/summ.htm All texts concerning the work of the Convention can be found on this website. Euronet received several positive replies from members from the Convention on our submission. Several member organisation from Euronet have also written to or met with their national members of the Convention, for example Spain, Ireland, the UK, Sweden, Belgium, Italy, France, Denmark.

A hearing of NGOs will take place with the Convention on 27 April. Euronet has been invited to this hearing to present our position. The timeframe for drafting of the Charter has been sped up by the Convention. They plan to have the draft finished by 5 June and
to adopt the draft Charter during the plenary session of 11 and 12 September 2000 in order to “oblige” the Biarritz European Council of 12 and 13 October 2000 to discuss the Charter. The Charter will need to be adopted by the Council on 7 December 2000 in Nice, France.

The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)

At the meeting of the EP Constitutional Affairs Committee on 22 March the Portuguese Presidency presented the results of a tour of the capitals on the IGC. Most member states have indicated that they do not wish to extend the list of subjects in the IGC. The Portuguese Presidency has made a list of subjects that they would like to discuss in addition to the leftovers from the Amsterdam Treaty. This list includes fundamental rights. Most member states are in favour of making a general rule to make decisions with qualified majority, but they all have their own exception to this rule. This means that many decisions that are now taken by unanimity and therefore can be blocked by one Member State can more easily be adopted with qualified majority. The EP Committee has adopted its report on the IGC by rapporteurs Giorgos Dimitrakopoulos and Jo Leinen on 23 March, which can be downloaded from the EP website http://www.europarl.eu.int/committees/. The IGC report does not mention children’s rights, but in the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs by Bartho Pronk on the IGC, a paragraph calls for the insertion of a reference to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Lisbon European Council promotes Social Inclusion

At the informal Interministerial summit in Lisbon on 13 March, Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs adopted a pledge to eradicate child poverty by the year 2010. On 23 and 24 March the Lisbon European Council stated in its conclusions that “Steps must be taken to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by setting adequate targets to be agreed by the Council by the end of the year.” In particular, the European Council invited the Council and the Commission to “develop priority actions addressed to specific target groups (for example minority groups, children, the elderly and the disabled), with Member States choosing amongst those actions according to their particular situations and reporting subsequently on their implementation.” It was decided to reach agreement on a European Social Agenda at the Nice European Council in December. Euronet will work on this with the Commission and the Council.

Euronet Meeting with Commissioner Diamantopoulou

At a meeting between Commissioner Diamantopoulou and Euronet representatives, Commissioner Diamantopoulou showed great interest in the rights of children. She was particularly interested in children and social exclusion and child labour.

Commissioner Diamantopoulou was very interested in the area of child poverty and following the informal Summit in Lisbon which made child poverty indicators a priority, she was particularly keen to develop common targets for the eradication of child poverty and to look at indicators such as health, education, etc and to include these in the Lisbon declaration. The Commission will now examine the issue of child poverty in its forthcoming
Communication on the Rights of the Child
As reported in previous newsletters, in the November plenary session of the European Parliament, Commissioner Vitorino announced that the Commission would publish a communication on children to mark the tenth anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Communication would aim to improve concrete policies in order to achieve the goals set by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Communication was welcomed in a resolution from the European Parliament.

Euronet also welcomed the initiative of the European Commission to publish a communication on children, but is also concerned that so far no action has been taken by the Commission to start the Communication. Euronet has produced a submission for the Commission which is based on the Euronet report “A Children’s Policy for 21st Century Europe: First Steps”. This submission will be sent to Euronet’s member organisations, who will be asked to send it to their national Commissioners and MEPs. It will also be published on our website. For more information contact Mieke Schuurman.

Ban on Phthalates in Toys
The Council has unanimously approved a proposal tabled by the Commission on March 8 to extend for three months the ban on soft plastic (PVC) toys and teething devices containing phthalates. The decision was taken pending the introduction of permanent legislation. Euronet has written letters to the relevant Commissioners to raise concern regarding the protection of the health of children. We received positive replies from Commissioners Byrne and Reding. The Director General on Health and Consumer Protection replied that he was very committed to the protection of child health in general.

The Commission has proposed to amend two directives: the Directive 76/769/EC concerning limits on the marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations (phthalates), and Council Directive 88/378/EC concerning the approximation of national legislation on the safety of toys. The amendment to the first directive prohibits the use of phthalates in toys and child care articles intended to be put in the mouth by children under the age of three. The amendment to the second directive states that toys containing phthalates, which are intended for children under the age of three and which can be put in the mouth, but are not intended for that purpose should have a warning on the packaging for the toy and a shorter warning on the toy itself. The proposal for amendments is now being discussed in the European Parliament Committee on Environment, Health and Consumer Affairs. The rapporteur is Per-Arne Arvidsson MEP.

Calls for Proposals
The Commission has issued a Call for Proposals (Budget line B5-803) for preparatory measures aimed at combating and preventing discrimination in accordance with Article 13 of the Treaty. The call for proposals has been published on 25 March 2000 in the Official Journal C88. Financial assistance under this call for proposals will be provided only for
transnational activities concerning at least two of the grounds of discrimination mentioned in Article 13. The deadline for submission of applications is 15 September 2000. For guidelines and an application form consult the website http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/tender or send an email to the following address: antidiscrimination@bxl.dg5.cec.be

The Commission will also shortly announce a call for proposals (budget line B3-4101) to support the activities of NGOs and voluntary organisations. This will also be published on the Website of the Commission.

**New Commission Website on Relation Commission and NGOs**
The Commission has recently launched a new website in English and French, which gives NGOs the opportunity to give their comments on a document published by the Commission on the cooperation between NGOs and the Commission. The address of the website is: http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat_general/sgc/ong/fr/index.htm

**EURONET PROJECTS**

**Building a Young People’s Network**

*Euronet is involved in a project which aims to stimulate the participation of children and young people in European issues. Euronet’s member BICE (International Catholic Children’s Bureau) is leading the Youth for Europe Project. This project aims to develop a young people’s network on children’s rights and to develop a young people’s version of the Euronet report “A Children’s Agenda for 21st Century Europe: First Steps”.*

The Youth Project involves the participation of children and youth groups in five EU Member States, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the UK. Euronet members in these countries are coordinating children and youth groups. In Belgium there are two groups of about 12 young people. One group of students from a Wallonian college and one group of young immigrants from the Flemish community in Brussels. In Ireland five member organisations from Focus on Children have each formed their own youth groups, three groups are in Northern Ireland and two groups are in the Republic of Ireland. These are all young people from socio-economic deprived areas. In Italy, BICE coordinates three partner organisations with about 30 groups of a total of 500 children. Among them are migrant children from Albania, former Yugoslavia and Africa. In Spain Save the Children will work with some other Spanish NGOs with groups of young people. In the U.K. Save the Children is working with a youth group which had organised a young people’s forum in Manchester. This youth group is led by a young person and the group includes people from different ethnic backgrounds and includes children with learning difficulties. All groups select the European themes they would like to discuss. Themes include social inclusion, asylum and immigrant policy, media and the internet and discrimination.

The youth groups will meet in their national countries and will communicate with other groups via the internet. The first weekend of October all groups will send their
representatives to a meeting in Dublin, where they will present the results of the national
discussions and develop a European Agenda for Children. This Agenda will be presented
at a conference in the European Parliament in Brussels on 22 November 2000. Young
people from other EU countries can also participate in the final conference.

For more information on the youth project you can contact the youth co-ordinator Alain
Aussems (BICE/Belgium), tel: +32 2 231 0388; fax: +32 2 2301133; e-mail:
aussems@gate71.be For more information on the final conference in Brussels contact Luisa
Maria Aguillar (BICE), tel: +32 2 231 0388; fax: +32 2 2301133, e-mail:
bice@village.uunet.be or Mieke Schuurman.

Challenging Non-discrimination, Social Inclusion and Participation

Euronet has received funding from the European Commission to work on a project which
intends to promote the rights of the child to non-discrimination, social inclusion and
participation. The objective of the project is to stimulate dialogue among children, young
people and adults (academics, Commission officials, practitioners, politicians and NGOs)
on discrimination and social exclusion experienced by children. This dialogue should
demonstrate that children can also experience multiple forms of discrimination and social
exclusion differently from adults and that children experience discrimination on the
grounds of age. At the same time the project highlights ways in which social exclusion and
discrimination against children can be combated through the direct participation of children
in decision making processes.

The project involves Euronet members in all 15 EU Member States. The project starts with
a consultation round on discrimination, social exclusion and participation with children and
young people in the EU. The children and young people involved in the youth project will
also participate in this consultation.

Regional Seminars
In addition, four regional seminars will be organised in which different aspects of
discrimination and social exclusion are discussed. Each seminar will involve Euronet
members from three or four countries. The first seminar is organised in Porto in Portugal
on 5 May with the title “The Child: Citizen of Europe”. The opening speech will be given by
Marta Santos Pais from UNICEF. Participants will come from Portugal, Greece, Italy and
Spain. Participants from other countries are also welcome. For more information contact
Jorge Ferreira, Lg. Mitelo, 1; 1150 Lisboa, Portugal; tel: +351 218824020; fax: +351
218824020.

Another seminar will be organised by COFRADEx in France at the beginning of September.
Save the Children - Finland will organise a seminar for the Northern European countries.
More information will follow in the next newsletter.

The project will be supported by a small group of academic experts from different
European countries. A researcher will write a policy document on the basis of the
consultation with the children and young people, the outcomes of the seminars, contacts
with other NGOs, research and input from experts. This document will be presented to the EU institutions at the end of November.

**How to get involved?**
If you have information on how children experience discrimination or social exclusion, please send this to the co-ordinator of the project, Mieke Schuurman. For more information on this project you can also contact her.

**NEWS FROM EURONET MEMBERS**

**Defence for Children/the Netherlands presents Report on Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children to Vice President European Parliament**

*In February Defence for Children/the Netherlands presented a joint report with ECPAT Europe on ‘Extraterritorial legislation as a tool to combat sexual exploitation of children’ to the European Parliament. The report is about the prosecution of abusers of children and deals with fifteen case studies of mainly European offenders in mostly Asian countries.*

The report contains several recommendations. At the meeting in the European Parliament DCI/NL said that the most important recommendation was to harmonize internationally the age limit for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse at the age of 18, which is the age of protection in the Convention. It was also said that there should not necessarily be one European law to prosecute offenders, but that it is more important to have 15 laws, which work in the same direction. In this respect Europol and interpol can play an important role. DCI/NL also recommended that “all offenses of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse against children committed abroad should be capable of prosecution extraterritorially. (as described in Article 34 Convention on the Rights of the Child). At the end of the meeting which was attended by several MEPs, assistants, Commission officials and NGO representatives, the report was officially given to James Provan MEP, Vice President of the European Parliament and Chairman of the Intergroup on Tourism.

For more information, on this report contact Annemieke Wolthuis, tel: +31 20 4203771; fax: +31 20 4203832; e-mail: dcinl@wxs.nl
Save the Children publishes ‘Children, Economics and the EU – Towards Child Friendly Policies’

Recently Save the Children published the book “Children, Economics and the EU – Towards Child Friendly Policies”. The book was written by the Save the Children Europe group and includes the views of children and young people.

What are child friendly economic policies? The book looks at the latest thinking of this important question, using European and international experience. For example, it looks at economic policy making in the EU, the impact of the Single Market and the Euro on children and the effect of EU trade agreements on children in less developed countries. A summary leaflet in English and French is also available and the book will shortly be available in Spanish from the Save the Children/Spain.

The book can be ordered from Save the Children Sweden, price 140 SEK, by contacting e-mail: rbpublishing@rb.se or by faxing your order to +46 8 698 9014 or via the internet at http://www.childrightsbookshop.org

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- **Brussels, Belgium**
  **27 April 2000** (09.15 until 17.00): Hearing of NGOs with the Convention drafting the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights at the European Parliament, Rue Wiertz, Paul Henri Spaak building, Room P1 (first floor) A002. An overflow for the public is foreseen on the 4th floor: P4, B001.

- **Porto, Portugal**
  **5 May 2000**: Euronet Seminar “The Child: Citizen from Europe” on integrated policies against exclusion and discrimination of children. For more information: Jorge Ferreira, Co-operative Society “Mais Crianca”, Lg. Mitelo, 1; 1150 Lisboa, Portugal; Tel: +351 218824020; Fax: +351 218850192.

- **Maastricht, the Netherlands**
  **10-13 May 2000**: “The Century of the Child: changes in views on (residential) child and youth care”, organised by FICE (Fédération Internationale Communautés des Enfants). For more information Conference Agency Limburg, tel: +31 43 3619192; fax: +31 43 3619020; e-mail: cal.conferenceagency@wxs.nl

- **Salzburg, Austria**
  **15-17 May 2000**: Conference “Step by Step: strategies for child welfare tomorrow”, organised by EFCW. For more information: ProJuventute Austria, Postfach 200; A-5013 Salzburg; Austria; Fax: +43/662/431355-32; E-mail: congress@projuventute.at

- **Windsor, UK**
  **19-21 May 2000**: “The missing Phenomenon, Windsor Workshop” on missing people organised by the National Missing Persons Helpline. For more information: David
Vienna, Austria
20 July 2000: Children’s World Conference, organised by Die Kinderfreunde in Austria. For more information: Romana Wöber; Tel: +43 512 12 98/51; E-mail: romana.woeber@kinderfreunde.at

Brussels, Belgium
31 August - 1 September 2000: Final conference on the inclusion of fundamental rights in the EU Treaty, organised by ETUC-Platform of European Social NGOs. For more information contact Sandrine Grenier, Tel: +32 2 511 3714; Fax: +32 2 511 1909; e-mail: sandrine.grenier@brutele.be

Strasbourg, France
11-13 October 2000: European preparatory conference for the World conference against racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance, organised by the Council of Europe.

Gent, Belgium
8-15 December 2000: Interdisciplinary Course on Children’s Rights organised by the Children’s Rights Centre, University of Ghent. This course will be the 5th celebration edition. The programme deals specifically with views and theories on children’s rights. The course provides extensive basic information and in-depth knowledge on background, motivation, strategies and main trends in the field of children’s rights. It is meant for professionals from governmental and non-governmental organisations working on the implementation of children’s rights in either a national or international capacity. Also academics, people who are professionally working with children in different domains and child advocates are invited to take part. The fee is US$ 1650 which covers the cost of materials, accommodation and meals. A limited number of (partial) scholarships are available. For more information and an application form contact: Kathy Vlieghe, tel: +32/9/264.62.81; fax: +32/9/264.64.93; e-mail: Kathleen.Vlieghe@rug.ac.be

Thessaloniki, Greece
11-15 March 2001: 3rd World Summit on Media for Children, organised by European Children’s Television Centre. For more information: tel: +30 1 6851258; fax: +30 1 6817987; e-mail: summit@children-media.org

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS


• **Newsletter of the International Save the Children Alliance (Brussels office):** this monthly newsletter gives more information on European issues for children as well as EU development policy related to children. It is produced once a month, in English, French and on e-mail.
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This newsletter is available in English and French, on e-mail and on the website. Euronet partners are encouraged to translate the newsletter in their own language or highlights of it. The Spanish member organisation 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.