Introduction

Welcome to issue 20 of the EURONET, the European Children’s Network, Newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter 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 on children. The newsletter also aims to be a means of communication between NGOs at national level.

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This issue is a “a maxi edition” of our Newsletter to update our readers on all child relevant topics and events that have taken place in the past months.

You will find news on the inclusion of children’s rights in the Draft EU Constitution on the Future of Europe, results of a children’s conference on the Future of Europe and the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). It also gives a report of the interministerial meeting on children in Lucca, Italy and information on the upcoming interministerial meeting on child abuse in Paris. Further news is there on the EU Budget and a report of EURONET’s involvement in the European Round Table on Social Exclusion and the EU Human Rights Experts Hearing. If you have questions, ideas, articles or remarks about the newsletter, please contact Mieke Schuurman or Carolina Santrich at the address above.
Children in the Draft Constitution: Children’s Rights in the Constitution for the Future of Europe

For the first time in the history of the European Union the protection of children’s rights are recognised in the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.

The Convention on the Future of Europe adopted by consensus on 10 July 2003 the final draft text of the Constitution including children’s rights as part of the internal and external objectives of the European Union. Children and their rights are close to getting the recognition they deserve.

EURONET fully supports the text of this article and will urge the IGC to adopt it as such. We also welcome the specific reference to children in three other articles of the future Constitutional Treaty:

Article III-168, which covers immigration policy and family reunion and “the combating of trafficking in persons, in particular women and children”.

Article III-172, which covers judicial co-operation in criminal matters in different areas of crime with cross-border dimensions including “sexual exploitation of women and children”.

Article III-182, which encourages co-operation between Member States in the area of education, youth and sport and is aiming to protect “the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen, especially young sportsmen and sportswomen”. EURONET stresses that youth also includes children.

Furthermore, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (ECFR, referred to in Article 7) will constitute the Second Part of this Constitution, which means that Article 24 of the ECFR referring to Children’s Rights will be an integral part of the new European Constitution.

EURONET recognised the Convention process since its start, as a crucial opportunity to raise again the issue of the invisibility of children in the Treaties of the European Union. The arguments for this were clearly set out in the numerous submissions EURONET made to the Convention: through public hearings for civil society; in the different working groups organised during the process; at personal meetings with some key members of the Convention; through the media, and at the official Convention web site forum. Moreover, EURONET’s member organisation and other supporting organisations were actively involved in advocating at national level for the mainstreaming of children’s rights into the new EU Treaty.

However, since the start of the Convention, children’s voices were not been heard enough. On July 2002, the Convention convened a one-week parallel Youth Convention in Brussels, yet, participants were selected between age range 18 to 25 years old, which excluded all European children under the age of 18.
EURONET Conference: “Children and the Future of Europe”

EURONET’s campaign considered this a special opportunity to combine the efforts for the recognition of children’s rights by the EU within the constitutional process set out by the Convention with the involvement of children themselves.

To ensure that children’s views and opinions would also influence discussions on the Future of Europe, EURONET engaged itself in a Children’s Participation Project, which formed part of EURONET’s overall, “Children are European Citizens too” campaign. The project ‘Children & the Future of Europe’ received the support of the European Commission General Secretariat, and had several phases, the most relevant part being a Children’s consultation throughout Europe to exchange ideas on the EU.

National children’s consultations on the Future of Europe were organised with children and young people from 11 EU member states and candidate countries. The consultations started on October 2002 in Belgium, Bulgaria, England, France, Greece, Ireland, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, and Wales.

Additionally, a Discussion Forum in EURONET’s web site was launched to facilitate exchanges between the young people and to, later on, present the results of the national consultations.

This process culminated at 2-days International Conference “Children and the Future of Europe” organised by EURONET in Brussels on 2-3 April 2003. The conference gathered children (aged 12-17) representing the 11 countries participating in the national consultations.

Children attended a first preparatory meeting day in Brussels. The following day, they worked during an “intergenerational” Conference together with representatives of the European Convention, EU Presidencies, Members of the European Parliament, Commission and NGOs in discussion sessions around different child-rights topics.

Key-note speakers at the conference were the EU Commissioner for Environment Margot Wallström, Vice president of the European Convention, Jean-Luc Dehaene and the following members of the European Parliament: Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Ewa Hedkvist, Carlos Carnero and Bartho Pronk. They all listened to the children’s contributions and responded to them.

Finally, at the end of the Conference, a delegation of under-18s went to the European Parliament to meet “in person” some members of the Convention, and presented to them the outcome of their 2-day conference.

This meeting took place during the break of a plenary session of the Convention and was attended by Klaus Hänsch (German MEP and member of the Convention Praesidium); Commissioner António Vitorino (Justice & Home Affairs); Alain Lamassoure MEP (France); and Adrian Severin (Romania, Parliament Representative).
One of the conclusions from the conference and the children’s debates was the necessity to include children’s rights in the new Constitutional Treaty of the European Union. Specific subjects the children were concerned with included the environment; children in institutions; trafficking in children; discrimination; poverty and social exclusion; and education. You will find the full conference report on EURONET’s web site.

**EURONET TRAINING DAY ON THE IGC**

**Warming up for EU Child Advocacy**

In October 2003 EURONET organised a Training session for children rights advocates within EURONET’s member organisations. The Training Day on “The European Union and the impact of the IGC (Intergovernemental Conference) on European children” was part of the “Children and the Future of Europe” project supported by the European Commission.

On Thursday 2 October EURONET prepared a visit to the European Parliament as an introduction to the Training Day. A delegation of EURONET’s member organisations met with some members of the European Parliament Children’s Alliance, to discuss the promotion of children's rights in Europe.

On Friday 3 October delegates attended the seminar on the functioning of the European Union, its institutions and the work of the European Convention as well as the Intergovernmental Conference. It was an interactive day in which through tasks, role plays and speakers, which presented the functioning of the EU institutions and its relation to children’s rights, the participants learned more about the EU and its effects on children’s rights.

A very useful description of the European Convention and the IGC was offered by Stephane VERWILGHEN (civil servant of the European Commission, Task Force on the Future of Europe). Simone EK, member of the EURONET Management Board from Save the Children Sweden, briefed the participants on the up-coming European Parliament Elections in 2004, and the role of children’s rights NGOs in this process.

**THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE (IGC) AND CHILDREN’S RIGHTS**

On 4 October the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), a conference of Heads of State or Governments of the current EU member states and the ten accession countries, was started in Italy by the Italian Presidency of the European Union. This IGC takes the text of the draft Constitution for the Future of Europe as a basis for its negotiations. The aim of the IGC is to amend the EU Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice to prepare the Union for enlargement. In particular institutional questions need to solved, such as the six-month rotating presidency of the EU, a new voting system for the Council, a European Minister for Foreign Affairs, the number of Commissioners, etc. But the aim is also to bring the EU closer to its citizens and to strengthen the democratic character of the EU.
The Time Line for the IGC runs around several meetings of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in October and November and others with the Heads of State or Government. On 28-29 November the Ministers of Foreign Affairs will prepare the complete package for the European summit, which will be continued on 9 December. The Heads of State or Government then meet on 12 and 13 December to conclude the IGC. In case the negotiations are not finalised by 12 and 13 December the discussions will continue during the Irish EU Presidency, which starts on 1 January 2004. The aim is to finalise the IGC before May 2004 when ten new countries will enter the EU and before the European Parliament elections in June 2004.

Role of Children’s NGOs in the IGC

During the first month of the IGC it has become clear that the objectives of the Union in Part I of the Draft Constitution will most likely not be opened up again. There is also support for the inclusion of the protection of children’s rights in the objectives of the Union.

Since the process of the IGC is less transparent then the process of the drafting of the Draft Constitution, it is important to liaise with your national representatives in the IGC and find out their positions on the inclusion of children’s rights in the objectives of the EU, but also about their positions on the other references to children in the draft Constitution. The national representatives in the IGC need to be convinced of the importance to include children’s rights in the new Constitution for the European Union.

Chapter IV of the constitution on asylum and migration issues is of concern to EURONET with regard to separated children. This Chapter moves from the position under the Amsterdam Treaty of seeking to establish minimum standards in the field of asylum to a common asylum policy. While in principle EURONET is not opposed to this move there is concern about the risk of a drop in standards in some Member States as regards the protection of asylum seekers and refugees, including separated children, which this could entail. Thus it is considered essential that the Constitution be considered to include a standstill provision whereby more favourable provisions in national law regarding asylum seekers and refugees cannot be abolished on the grounds of the common policy.

Request for Action:

- Contact your national representatives in the IGC and send them letters to raise the importance of the inclusion of children’s rights in the EU Constitution or arrange meetings with them.
- A draft letter is available from EURONET.
- Liaise with other children’s rights NGOs or social NGOs in your country and co-operate in your work for the IGC. This has already been done in the UK, where NSPCC took the initiative to get several children’s NGOs together and send joint letters to UK representatives in the IGC.
Interministerial Meeting on Children in Lucca adopts declarations on child labour and sexual abuse of children

The EU Ministers and Ministers of accession countries responsible for childhood met on 25/26 September in Lucca, Italy for an interministerial meeting on children. The meeting was organised by the Italian Presidency. EURONET was invited to participate as an observer. The Ministers discussed the issues of the fight against sexual abuse of children and of child labour in the EU and the setting up of an European Ombudsman for Children.

After the meeting, the Ministers published a declaration in which they declared the importance of supporting all actions for preventing and combating the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. They also declared to support the involvement of civil society, NGOs, associations and children themselves in actions committed to combating these phenomena. The Declaration stated the importance of encouraging the creation of systems for collecting data and for monitoring the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. The Ministers agreed to support and set up projects of interventions such as those implemented by the EU – Stop and Daphne- and welcomed the EU decision to promote a second phase of the Daphne Programme. The meeting highlighted the importance of ensuring that child victims are effectively protected and supported during judicial proceedings through the strengthening where necessary the legal, judicial and inquiry instruments. The Declaration supported actions for early prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation with the involvement of children themselves. Concerning the transnationality of sexual exploitation, the Ministers supported international co-operation and the adoption of a “zero tolerance” approach.

On the issue of child labour in the EU, the Ministers declared to give priority to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The declaration also gave special attention to children who are at particular risk of economic exploitation, including girls, migrant children, street children, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, Roma children and other minority groups. The Declaration stated that it is necessary to debate further the issue of child labour and to strengthen the work carried out by Governments, social partners, international organisations, NGOs and other relevant organisations as the most effective way to obtain positive results. The Ministers wanted to promote a better understanding of child labour at national and European levels through monitoring, research, discussion forums and round tables.
The role of schools in promoting life skills was also supported and lastly the Ministers declared it important to encourage and create opportunities and mechanisms for assessing the impact and results of action taken with regard to combating child labour.

The meeting also debated the establishment of a European Ombudsman for Children. Several countries supported the idea of some kind of structure and co-ordination at EU level to protect children's rights. Some countries supported the idea of a high level representative for children at EU level, but would like to have this further studied and discussed at their meeting during the Irish Presidency. Ireland agreed to put this subject on the Irish Presidency agenda for further discussion. EURONET supports the creation of a high-level representative for children within the European Union and has also submitted a paper on this to the meeting in Lucca.

For more information or the full text of the Declarations adopted, contact mieke.schuurman@tiscali.nl

**Interministerial Meeting on Child Abuse on 20 November in Paris**

On 20 November the Italian EU Presidency in co-operation with the French government will organize a conference of European Ministers responsible for children. The theme of the conference on children is “the prevention of abuse, the promotion of ‘good-treatment’: a European ambition”. The subjects to be discussed at this meeting are the balance and the perspectives of the European Daphne Programme; telephone help lines to register child abuse; the concept of ‘good-treatment’ of children.

EURONET is invited to participate at this meeting. National children’s NGOs are also encouraged by the French government to participate in this meeting and have to liaise with their national ministers responsible for children to be able to participate. A report of this meeting will be given in the next newsletter.

**Round Table on Social Exclusion Torino**

From 16-17 October the Second European round table on poverty and social exclusion, this time focusing on “the role of the family in promoting social inclusion” took place. Government representatives, Commission officials, NGO representatives, academics/experts and people experiencing social exclusion took part in this round table. Euronet did a presentation in one of the workshops on ‘giving budgetary resources to social exclusion and poverty of children in the EU member states’.

The round table on social exclusion focused in its plenary sessions on the role of the family in promoting social inclusion and on the second National Action Plans on social inclusion (NAPs/incl 2003), which have this summer been published by all EU member states. Several workshops focused on different instruments for social inclusion related to the NAPs/incl 2003. These were the instruments for measuring and monitoring the phenomenon; the instruments for the promotion of the mobilization of actors; the instruments for the promotion of equal access to services, resources and rights and financial instruments in support of National Plans. In this last workshop Euronet presented several budgetary measures that EU governments take to combat children’s poverty and social exclusion, such as children’s benefit systems, child care allowances,
measures related to employment, education measures and measures in relation to divorces. One of the conclusions of the presentation was that benefits received by families need to be sufficient to keep children out of poverty. Secondly, families not depending on benefits need to receive sufficient payment for work and additional benefits to remain outside poverty and need to be able to access this. The text of the presentation is available from Mieke Schuurman.

At the Round Table the European Commission presented its first assessment of the NAPs/incl of 2003 of the EU member states. The ten accession countries will do their first NAPs/incl in 2004. The final report of the Commission will be ready in December and will also include outcomes from the Round Table. In 2005 the Commission will do a Joint Report on Social Inclusion.

The first conclusions of the assessment of the NAPs/incl are:

1. There is a more difficult economic context at this time then two years ago.
2. There is progress in the analytical content of the NAPs/incl: most member states used the Laeken indicators.
3. Five key priorities can be identified:
   - Increase investment in active labour market measures.
   - Ensure minimum income
   - Increase access to health, education, culture, housing for the most vulnerable
   - Focus on child poverty and a greater attention for the family
   - Focus on immigrants and ethnic minorities: increase their labour market participation
4. Most NAPs/incl provide a wealth of information on policies and institutions, but the evaluation of the impact is mostly missing.
5. The future monitoring of the implementation of the NAPs/incl is critical.

**EURONET included in EU Budget**

Currently the EU is debating its Budget for 2004. The European Parliament which is one of the budget authorities of the EU, next to the Council of Ministers, has adopted in its Budget Committee the inclusion of Euronet and other social NGOs in the budget line on Support for the running costs of the Platform of European Social NGOs. The Budget rapporteur, Jan Mulder MEP (Liberal Group), supported the inclusion of several NGOs in this budget line, which also gained the support of the two biggest political groups in the European Parliament. In particular, Terry Wynn MEP, chair of the Budget Committee (Socialist Group) and Bartho Pronk MEP (PPE/ED Group) supported the inclusion of social NGOs in an EU Budget line.

Following the adoption in the budget committee, on 23 October the plenary session of the European Parliament also adopted the amendment including the names of several social NGOs. After this adoption the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council of Ministers will debate the outcomes and a new version will be send to the European Parliament for a ‘second reading’. The final vote will take place in December. This newsletter will keep you informed on the outcomes.
Hearing on Fundamental Rights

Organised by the EU Network of Independent Experts (CFR-CDF)

EURONET was invited to participate in the Hearing of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Fundamental Rights (CFR-CDF) by the European Parliament and the Commission on 16 October in Brussels. The aim of the hearing was to hear about the situation of human rights as described in the Charter of Fundamental Rights within the member states of the EU. Euronet was asked to report on the situation of children’s rights within the EU.

The hearing with NGO’S was divided into 4 sessions: An opening General Approach session, A ‘Fundamental Social Rights and Rights of Workers’ Session, followed by a Justice and Home Affairs’ session, and finally a Specific Issues’ session, to which EURONET submitted a contribution.

1. In the Fundamental Social Rights and Rights of Workers Session, experts started by pointing out that NGOs are still fairly weak in taking up the rights’ approach. They tended to suggest the encouragement of the national members of the NGO networks to get involved in the work of the group, either by giving input to the CFR-CDF or just comment on the reports. Experts, explained that their field of competence falls more into the civil liberties than social rights and that NGOs should provide them on a regular basis with information on violations of rights of the Charter.

The participants agreed that future reports should adopt a thematic approach in social rights issues, as it is an area very difficult to deal with, but strategically very important.

2. In the Justice and Home Affairs’ Session the discussions focused on the closer collaboration with the UNHCR, as well as on the new developments in European asylum legal procedures. A detailed discussion of anti-discrimination provision in the field of asylum and immigration ensued.

3. In the Specific Issues session, the topic of asylum came back to the table with the discussion on separated children and the family reunification directive. Trafficking in children was also examined.

The Hearing ended with a long exchange of concrete recommendations on the different topics discussed, which could be summarised as an encouragement and commitment from both sides to write a better 2003 report on the situation of fundamental rights in the EU and its member states.

TV violence and its impact on minors discussed by Audiovisual Council

The informal Council of Ministers on audiovisual matters urged the exchange of good practices and the drafting of codes of good conduct on the issue of the impact of television on minors and in particular the impact of violence on television. This was said in relation to the review of the Television Without Frontiers Directive. The Ministers will meet for a formal session on 24-25 November in Brussels.
**PUBLICATIONS**

**SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Save the Children Norway has initiated research on sexual abuse of children with disabilities. Four reports on this subject have been completed and the studies show that disabled children are more often subjected to sexual abuse and that they are more vulnerable than other children. The reasons for this are complex. The summaries of the studies that have been carried out on this by

Save the Children Norway are published in a booklet and contains:

- A study of international literature giving an indication of the prevalence of sexual abuse of disabled children.
- A study of what happens in Norwegian hospitals in connection with the medical examination of children one suspects have been abused sexually.
- A mapping of deaf children’s situation relation to possible abuse during their childhood
- A study of blind children’s situation relating to abuse.

The report can be obtained by sending an email to: Save the Children Norway: e-mail: rettighetssenteret@reddbarna.no

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**Calls for Proposals of the European Commission**


Call for proposals for preparatory work to establish transnational actions for the development of policy and/or legal responses to the fight against discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age and sexual orientation. The deadline for applications is **28 November 2003**. For more information on the content of the call e-mail: [empl-antidiscrimination@cec.eu.int](mailto:empl-antidiscrimination@cec.eu.int) or visit the Commission website at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/prog/calls_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/prog/calls_en.htm)

The **Community Youth Action Programme**: call for submission of large-scale cooperation, training and information projects, Action 5 – Support Measures (DG EAC 17/03) (2003/C 247/07). Deadline for applications is **31 December 2003**. The application forms can be obtained from the internet at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/lsp_action_5_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/lsp_action_5_en.html)
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

5 November 2003 — Brussels, Belgium: NSPCC Round Table ‘After the IGC – Child protection in a new Europe’ and Reception at the European Parliament. For more information contact Tara Hopkins at NSPCC, Tel: +44 207 82511329; Fax: +44 207 8252763 or e-mail: THOPKINS@NSPCC.org.uk

19/20 November 2003 — Innsbruck, Germany: “Children’s Rights in Germany and Europe” organized by the German National Coalition for Children’s rights. For more information contact: National Coalition für die Umsetzung der UN-Kinderrechtskonvention in Deutschland (NC), Tel: +49 30 400 40 200; Fax: +49 30 400 20 232, e-mail: national-coalition@agj.de

20 November 2003 – Austria: “99 balloons for more Children’s Rights”. On this day one of the biggest children’s campaigns in Austria will start. 900 groups in Austria and 99 international partner groups will set a sign for more children’s rights together. Each group will fly 99 balloons in the air at 14.09 pm. Attached to the balloons will be cards with 99 wishes and worries of each of these children’s groups. These wishes and worries will be collected by the Austrian Kinderfreunde, which will analyse them and provide them to the public and the Federal Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection. This Ministry is working on the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the children’s rights in Austria.

This event is part of the campaign “Children for Europe – Europe for children”. This campaign wants to offer children and young people the possibility to participate actively in the discussion about a more child friendly society and to bring children’s rights issues to the public in Austria and in Europe.

For more information contact Claudia Hüttnner of Austrian Kinderfreunde, Tel: +43 1 512 Fax: +4 512 1298/62; e-mail: Claudia.huettner@kinderfreunde.at

25-28 March 2004 – Lisbon, Portugal: 8th European Conference of the European Association for Children in Hospital. For more information contact: Giuliana Filippazzi, Via Tesio 7, I-20151 Milano, e-mail: g.filippazzi@libero.it

11-18 December 2003 – Ghent, Belgium: Course on Children’s Rights organised by the Children’s Rights Center at the University of Ghent. For more information and registration forms contact Katy Vlieghe, Tel: +32 9 264 62 81; Fax: +32 9 264 64 93; e-mail: Kathleen.Vlieghe@ugent.be

10-11 December 2003 – Italy: Human Rights Forum on Children’s rights organized by the Italian Presidency of the EU
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