EURONET
The European Children’s Network
Issue 14, August 2001

NEWSLETTER

Table of Contents

Introduction p.1

European Charter of Fundamental Rights p.2

Social Exclusion p.4
- National action plans

UN Special Session on Children p.5
- Third PrepCom
- Youth participation

Forthcoming Events p.9

Euronet Member Organisations

Euronet project funded with support of the European Commission
EURONET WEBSITE:
HTTP://EUROPEANCHILDRENSNETWORK.GLA.AC.UK
• **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to issue 14 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 concerning children. The newsletter also aims to be a means of communication between NGOs at national level.

**Please note Euronet’s new address:** Rue Montoyer 39, 1000 Brussels, tel. +32 (0)2 512 4500, fax. +32 (0)2 513 4903.

This issue gives further information about the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, which has been proclaimed in December 2000 and includes an article on the rights of the child. This issue also addresses the national action plans on Social Exclusion, which have been submitted by Member States in June 2001. The Newsletter will also inform you about the preparations for the UN Special Session on Children and the activities organised to involve children and young people.

If you have questions, ideas, articles or remarks about the newsletter, please contact Mieke Schuurman, who will be working for Euronet again from September 2001. You can send your ideas to the address mentioned above or contact her at tel. +31 187 481396 (on Mondays & Tuesdays), e-mail: mieke.schuurman@tiscali.nl

If you would like to receive the Newsletter by e-mail in the future or no longer wish to receive it, please send an e-mail to savechildbru@skynet.be
European Charter of Fundamental Rights

Background

Last year, Euronet worked actively on the draft text of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The text now includes a specific article on the rights of the child. (see previous issues of our Newsletter for a longer discussion on this).
Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights reads:

The Rights of the Child
1. Children shall have the right to such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being. They may express their views freely. Such views shall be taken into consideration on matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity.
2. In all actions relating to children, whether taken by public authorities or private institutions, the child’s best interest must be a primary consideration.

The Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission on 7 December 2000 proclaimed the Charter in conjunction with the Nice European Council.

For the text Euronet submitted during the drafting process, visit the website of the European Council: [http://ue.eu.int/en/summ.htm](http://ue.eu.int/en/summ.htm)

Legal status

The objective of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is to stress the importance and relevance of the protection and promotion of human rights and make this more visible for the citizens of the European Union. The Charter is relevant to the EU institutions and the Member States when they act under Union law.

For Euronet and others it is important to understand what legal status, if any, the Charter of Fundamental Rights has and whether it takes us any nearer to having a comprehensive legal base in the EU Treaties to promote and protect children’s rights. Though clearly adding value with regard to the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, the Convention has worked within the framework of existing powers and in line with the subsidiarity principle. This means that at present, its significance is principally political and not legal.

The Convention has not addressed the issue of legal binding force of the Charter. At this stage, the Charter will not have any impact on court action or the court structure provided for by the Treaties. The right to court hearings at the national as well as international level will be exercised according to existing legal rules.
Whether the Charter remains a mainly political declaration or will have binding legal effect and whether it will be incorporated into the Treaties as primary law and will enumerate a list of rights that are enforceable before the Union’s courts, ultimately depends on the Council.

Many members of the Convention as well as the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and representatives of civil society have stressed that the Charter should be incorporated into the Treaties. The Commission thinks that ‘for the sake of visibility and certainty as to the law, it is preferable for the Charter to be made mandatory in its own right and not just through its judicial interpretation’.

The question of how and when the Charter should be incorporated into the Treaties, is a question for the Heads of State when discussing the revision of the Treaties. Before the Nice Council it was hoped that Head of States and Governments would decide on objectives and procedural details on how to deal with the question. The conclusions of Nice state, that the Council wishes to see the Charter disseminated as widely as possible amongst the Union’s citizens and the question of the Charter’s force will be considered later. It was decided that during the discussions about the next Intergovernmental Conference in 2004, the question of the status of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union should be addressed.

The European Social Policy Platform, along with the ETUC is working on presenting a document with commentaries and revised proposals for the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Save the Children, a Euronet and Platform member, has submitted the following text to the European Social Policy Platform:

‘In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration and the rights of the child shall be respected and ensured without discrimination of any kind. The child shall be assured the right to express its views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child shall be given due weight’

Euronet, whilst welcoming for the first time the inclusion of an article on children’s rights in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, would wish to see a different, stronger text if the Charter were to be incorporated into the EU Treaties. Euronet would prefer a text which was compatible with the UN- Convention on the Rights of the Child and therefor did not represent a lowering of already agreed international standards. Therefore we would prefer a text as stated above. Euronet, which began as a coalition of NGOs working on getting a legal base in the EU Treaty will monitor these developments carefully and continue to work to ensure that at the next IGC the Treaty contains a legal base to promote and protect children’s rights.
Social Exclusion: National Action Plans

In December 2000, the European Council of Nice approved the following objectives on combating poverty and social exclusion:

- facilitating participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services
- preventing the risk of exclusion
- helping the most vulnerable (which includes moving towards the elimination of social exclusion among children and giving them every opportunity for social integration)
- mobilising all relevant bodies

To achieve these objectives, Member States were invited to develop their priorities within the framework of the above objectives and to present a national action plan by June 2001, covering a period of two years. They were also invited to develop indicators and monitoring mechanisms at national level for measuring progress on the objectives in their national action plans.

The national action plans, which have been submitted by most Member States, are part of the open method of co-ordination, which will combine the action plans with a community support programme. The Council and European Commission will draw up a comparison of the national action plans in a joint report, which will include recommendations and successful approaches of common interest.

The national action plans will be used as one of the sources for the research, which will be undertaken for Euronet’s project ‘Combating children’s and young people’s social exclusion: the development of a coherent approach’. The national action plans will show whether and to what extent Member States have specifically addressed the issue of child poverty and social exclusion of children and young people. References to children in the national action plans can for example be found with regard to the effect of household-income, access to education, healthcare and domestic violence.

The national action plans can be downloaded from the European Anti Poverty Network: www.eapn.org
UN Special Session on Children 2001

Final PrepCom

During the third and final session of the Preparatory Committee to the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children, which took place in New York on 11-15 June 2001, the second revised draft outcome document ‘A World Fit for Children’ was discussed though not finalised. Some fifty government representatives and over 800 NGOs attended the third PrepCom.

During the formal meetings a lot of discussion took place on use of language, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as framework for action, sexual and reproductive health and the issue of abortion. The often difficult discussions showed the controversies and different starting points between various groups represented and between ‘promoting’ and ‘ensuring’ rights.

In the end many issues were left unresolved. In order to reach agreement and finalise the document, which will be presented to the government leaders at the UN Special Session on Children in September 2001, the Governments continued informal consultations on 21-22 and 28-29 June 2001. At this stage most of the document has been agreed upon, but more meetings will take place on 27-31 August 2001 to finalise the remaining paragraphs.

Young people’s participation

The General Assembly, in its resolution on Preparations for the Special Session on Children, emphasised the importance of participatory processes at the national, regional and international levels and highlighted the important role children and young people play in this process. Since children’s and young people’s participation is considered as meaningful and valuable in providing their perspectives on proceedings and what the Special Session should achieve for them, children and young people have been encouraged to contribute to the meetings of the Preparatory Committee.

During the second PrepCom young people participated as expert panellists on two panels, which took place as official proceedings of the PrepCom, several young people delivered statements on behalf of their Governments and children and young people actively participated in side events organised by NGOs. Prior to the beginning of the Third PrepCom a briefing workshop for NGO and Governments delegates under the age of 18 was held. A child friendly summary of the Secretary General’s report ‘We the Children-end decade review of follow-up to the World Summit for Children’ was prepared and distributed.
Children and young people are also encouraged to participate in a Children’s forum, which will take place on 16-18 September, prior to the UN Special Session on Children. During this forum delegates under 18 years from Governments and NGOs will discuss their role in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action to be adopted at the Special Session.

The purpose of the Children’s Forum is:

- To give an opportunity to participants to further explore the issues of the outcome document of the Special Session ‘A World Fit For Children’
- To enable participants to discuss ways in which they can be actively involved in the implementation and monitoring of the goals laid down in the Outcome Document
- To enable participants to identify constructive ways on how they can influence their governments, UN agencies, NGOs and other decision- makers on programmes designed to benefit children

The outcome of the Forum will be presented in the Plenary of the Special Session by at least two national child delegates to be selected by the Forum.

Budapest

In Europe one of the events for children and young people within the framework of regional preparations for the Special Session was the Youth Forum entitled ‘Towards a Young People’s Agenda for Europe and Central Asia’, organised by UNICEF, Save the Children UK and the European Youth Centre Budapest in Budapest on 23-29 April 2001.

Young people between 14 and 18 years from twenty seven countries in Europe and Central Asia came together to discuss various issues affecting children such as poverty, drug abuse, participation, discrimination, mass media, unemployment, environment and violence.

The young people prepared a joint letter expressing their views on how to achieve improvement of education systems, peace and how to combat and eradicate poverty. This document was presented by a group of eight young people to the Intergovernmental Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia, which took place in Berlin on 16-18 May 2001. Four young people who attended the Budapest meeting have been selected to go to the UN Special Session in September.

Euronet received a review of the Budapest event from the Spanish participants. For them it was a unique experience to meet and get to know young people from different cultures. The multicultural environment gave them the opportunity to learn many new things. In order to set political strategies aimed at improving respect for their rights, the participants
think politicians and others who play a role in their lives must take their opinions seriously. They strongly support and would like to see more opportunities to express themselves freely on all issues affecting them.

Global consultation

Almost one thousand children and young people between 5-18 years representing over 50 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas contributed to Save the Children’s global consultation with children and young people around the 2nd revised draft Outcome document, ‘A World Fit for Children’. The results of this consultation are laid down in the document entitled ‘Listen to Us!’. One of the main messages from the children and young people is that their participation is necessary to achieve real change.

The document was widely distributed at the 3rd PrepCom in New York and was very popular with both children and young people at the preparatory workshop, which was organised for them, as well as with Government and NGO delegates.

‘Listen to Us’ can be downloaded from the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) website: www.crin.org and from the new Save the Children Special Session site: http://www.savethechildren.ca/specialsession/.

The Save the Children website has a new section on the Special Session on Children, specifically aimed at children and young people. The website explains what the Special Session is, its history, it provides links to other sources of information and presents the experiences of three young people living in very different cultures and contexts. It also shows how young people as individuals or through the involvement of their schools, can get their views heard at the Special Session itself.

Website: www.savethechildren.org.uk
Go to: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/summitup/index.html or http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=1773

For more information about regional preparations and the participation of young people, visit:  
http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/documentation/documents/newsletter-no2.pdf or www.crin.org/specialsession
Young people and the Swedish Presidency

Rädda Barnen, Euronet’s Swedish member organisation, organised a Children’s Summit in Gothenburg on 13 June 2001. Some 400 children between 11 and 16 years old drafted recommendations on different subjects related to children’s issues. The recommendations were handed over to the Swedish deputy Prime Minister, Mrs. Lena Hjelm-Wallen. The participants of the Children’s Summit made clear that:

- Children are as much as adults entitled to human rights
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has to be taken into account in all decisions taken by the EU institutions
- Politicians have to listen to children’s views
- No child should be sexually exploited
- Discrimination among children must be prevented

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

• **Limerick, Ireland**
  **28-31 August 2001**: *World Forum 2001 The Children’s Agenda- Familiar Issues, Emerging Concerns*. This Forum is organised by the International Forum for Child Welfare and Barnados. The Forum will examine the challenges facing children in our society such as poverty, violence and ill-health. For more information contact the conference organisers, Conference Partners Ltd, 96 Haddington Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Ireland. Tel. +353 16 677 188, Fax. +353 16 643 701, E-mail: info@conferencepartners.ie

• **Brussels, Belgium**
  **7 September 2001**: ‘Satellite Street Children Project’; Eastern Europe Training Programme- Promoting the Active Participation and Inclusion of Street Children.
  Concluding event after a one-week training seminar organised for street workers from Eastern and Central Europe, organised by the European Network on Street Children World-wide. The workers will resume their work done within the two-year project ‘Satellite Street Children Project’. For more information contact Nuria Mecher, ENSCW, Avenue Alber 137, 1190 Brussels, Belgium. Tel. +32 2 347 78 48, Fax. +32 2 347 79 46, E-mail: info@enscw.org

• **Bath, UK**
  **20-22 September 2001**: *World Congress on Children’s Rights and Family Law*
  This International Congress is aimed at establishing the International Children’s Protection Network, to provide a permanent ‘bank’ of lawyers and associated professionals who can work on landmark cases involving youngsters at short notice. Major themes will include impact of media coverage on children’s rights issues, child labour, international abduction
of children, children as witnesses and the effectiveness of international conventions on family law. For more information visit www.lawrights.asn.au

- **Sion, Switzerland**
  **16-20 October 2001: ‘Child and War’**
  This seminar, organised by the International Institute for the Rights of the Child (IDE), will seek to bring to light all the situations where children can be implicated in war. It will make a point of looking at the challenge that juvenile justice is faced with in relation to child war criminals. The seminar is meant for professionals: members of NGOs active in this field, members of armed forces, doctors, lawyers, social workers etc. Researchers and students nearing the end of their studies are also welcome. For more information visit www.childright.org

- **London, UK**
  **14-16 November 2001: ‘Playing to learn—the educational role of children’s museums’,** organised by Hands on! Europe (the European Association of Children’s Museums). The conference will look at what and how children learn in children’s museums and hands-on centres, and how to create better learning environments. The draft programme is available on [http://www.centresforcuriosity.org.uk/conference.htm](http://www.centresforcuriosity.org.uk/conference.htm).
  Booking forms, with a discount for bookings before 29 June 2001, are available from Georgia Akrigg: [cci@kidsclub.co.uk](mailto:cci@kidsclub.co.uk)
Euronet Co-ordinator
Mieke Schuurman
Rue Montoyer 39
B- 1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32.2.5124500/5127851
Fax: +32.2.5134903
E-mail: savechildbru@skynet.be

EURONET Member Organisations:

Diana Sutton
International Save the Children Alliance
Rue Montoyer 39
B – 1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 5127851
Fax: +32 2 5134903
E-mail: savechildbru@skynet.be

Luisa Maria Aguilar
Bureau International Catholique de l’Enfance
16, Rue Stevin
1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 231.03.88/32.2.231.04.74
Fax: +32 2 2301133
E-mail: bice@village.uunet.be

Jacqueline Andries
Organisation Mondiale Pour l’Education Prescolaire
Avenue de Montalembert, 27
B-1330 Rixensart
Tel: +32 2 653 48 12
Fax: +32 2 652 18 87

AUSTRIA
Paul Artz
Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaft Salzburg
Ombudsoffice for Children & Youth
Strubergasse 4
A - 5020 Salzburg
Tel: +43 662 430550
Fax: +43 662 43059017
E-mail: kija@salzburg.co.at

BELGIUM
Jan van Gils
Kind en Samenleving
Nieuwelaan 63
B - 1860 Meise
Tel: +32 2 269 7180
Fax: +32 2 269 7872
E-mail: jvangils@ndo.be
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.