Introduction

Welcome to issue 19 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.

Please note Euronet’s contact details of the co-ordinator Mieke Schuurman, tel: +31 187 481396, fax: +31 187 487390, e-mail: mieke.schuurman@tiscali.nl (from Mondays to Wednesdays). The office address remains Rue Montoyer 39, 1000 Brussels, tel. +32 (0)2 512 4500, fax. +32 (0)2 513 4903 and the contact person there is Carolina Santrich.

This issue contains news on the EU Convention on the Future of Europe and Euronet’s project to include children in the debate on the Future of Europe and listen to their views on a future Europe. It also gives a report of the European Round Table on Social Exclusion and the meeting of Children’s NGOs from all over Europe in Lithuania. If you have questions, ideas, articles or remarks about the newsletter, please contact Mieke Schuurman at the address above.

We are intending to send the newsletter by e-mail and avoid sending paper copies. If you do not receive the newsletter by email yet and would like to receive it this way, please send your email address to Carolina Santrich europeanchildrennetwork@skynet.be.

If you still wish to receive the Newsletter by post or no longer wish to receive it please...
Euronet starts Children’s Participation Project around the European Convention: “Children are European Citizens Too”

Since the start of the European Convention children’s voices have not been heard. To ensure that children’s views and opinions will also influence discussions on the Future of Europe and the proposed new Treaty of the European Union, Euronet has started consultations with children in six EU countries and a parallel Website Forum.

Children and young people (average age 14-18 years old) in six countries (England, France, Greece, Spain, Sweden and Wales) will be participating in a series of national children’s consultations on the Future of Europe until the end of March 2003. Some of the themes identified by the children which will be discussed are social exclusion and poverty; children’s participation; health; education; environment and violence. These consultations are being organised and facilitated by Euronet member organisations in each country. Representatives from these national consultations will meet in Brussels in early April 2003 and will have the opportunity to present the results of their discussions to civil society organisations, Members of the European Parliament and members of the Convention.

At the same time a Website Forum has been set up and intends to connect many more children from all over Europe, including Central and Eastern European Countries, in the debate on the Future of Europe. A special website discussion forum has been constructed on the Euronet website for this purpose (please note the change of address of the Euronet website). The results of this website discussion will be put together in a summary report of children’s views. This will be posted on the website as well as forming part of the presentation to members of the Convention at its meeting in Brussels in April 2003.

Website Address: www.europeanchildrensnetwork.org

On 2 April 2003 there will be a preparatory day for children and a training day on the functioning of the European Union for Euronet member organisations. This project is supported with funding from the European Commission.

Please note now the Conference date on the Future of Europe for children, NGOs and representatives of European institutions: 3 April 2003 in Brussels.

For more information contact: Mieke Schuurman for general information (project co-ordinator) Carolina Santrich for information on the website and the conference (see contact details on first page of this newsletter) or Clare Feinstein for information on the participation of children (youth co-ordinator), email: niebuhr@xs4all.nl or mailto:clare.feinstein@savethechildren.nl
Euronet’s Reaction to the Preliminary Draft Constitutional Treaty

On 28 October 2002 the Praesidium of the Convention presented its preliminary draft constitutional Treaty to the plenary session. This draft is only a framework proposal and does not contain a reference to children. Euronet has submitted a reaction to this draft to the Convention members in which it stresses the need to mainstream children in the new EU Constitutional Treaty and in which it gives several proposals for Treaty articles.

In the draft Constitutional Treaty there are several articles which are relevant to children. For example, the article which sets out the values of the Union (Article 2). In particular the fundamental rights of EU citizens are relevant for children. Also important is the article on the legal personality of the EU which would enable the EU to accede to international human rights Treaties (Article 4). Or the article which defines Union citizenship (Article 5). Euronet recommends that this includes children and young persons and that it should clarify that they enjoy these rights where appropriate in the EU, in accordance with the rights laid down in the national legislations on citizenship. Article 6 will refer to or incorporate the Charter of Fundamental Rights. This is supported by Euronet, however alone it is not sufficient to guarantee the protection and promotion of the rights of the child in EU legislation. For this, a separate Treaty article which mainstreams children in EU policies and legislation is needed.

Concerning the participation of EU citizens there is Article 34. Euronet recommends in this respect that children and young people and the organisations that represent them need to be able to participate fully in decisions that affect them, based on Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In its reaction Euronet proposes including an Article which guarantees children’s rights in the first part of the new Constitutional Treaty, either under the objectives of the Union or in the part on Union citizenship and fundamental rights.

THE CONVENTION FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: AN UPDATE

OTHER PAPERS SUBMITTED TO THE CONVENTION BY EURONET ARE:

- “Children are European Citizens Too: Children in the EU Treaty”, April 2002
- “Does the EU need a competence for children in the Treaty?”, September 2002
- “Children’s Rights are Human Rights”, October 2002

For general information consult the Convention website: http://european-convention.eu.int
In November the Working Group on Social Europe was founded after requests from Convention members and Civil Society. The Working Group on Social Europe chaired by the Greek government representative and MEP Giorgos Katiforis, had its first short meeting on 6 December to prepare for their meeting on 11 December. The working group will finalize its discussions at the end of January and present its report to the plenary of the European Convention on 6-7 February.

The mandate of the Working group is to discuss which basic values, general objectives and competences the EU should have in the social field. In addition, the open method of coordination and the coordination between economic and social policies will be discussed, as well as the role of the social partners and voting procedures.

A draft report will be ready by 17 January and a hearing with a maximum of four experts will be organised before the end of January. The Working group has the interest of many Convention members. The members have made their first written contributions on the subject of the values, objectives and competences of the EU. Helle Thorning-Schmidt MEP, following a meeting with Euronet representatives, included in her contribution the need to include a reference to the protection of children’s rights in Article 3 of the new constitutional treaty. This would result in a mainstreaming of children’s rights. Euronet very much welcomes and supports this initiative.

**REQUEST FOR ACTION:**

Contact your national members in the Convention Working Group on Social Europe and ask them to support the contribution of Helle Thorning-Schmidt with respect to include in the EU Treaty a reference to children’s rights. For a list of names of Working Group members see the Covention website or contact Mieke Schuurman.

**Support for the Inclusion of Children in the EU Treaty**

**Mirsini Zorba MEP: The Future of Europe is the Future of Children**

Mirsini Zorba MEP has taken the initiative to launch an appeal in the European Parliament to get a legal base for children in the EU Treaties. This appeal is focused at the European Convention and at the Intergovernmental Conference in 2004. She is trying to get support from other MEPs for her appeal.

**Glenys Kinnock MEP: Call for Children’s Article in EU Treaty**

At the conference “Children as Actors of Change”, organised by UNICEF Belgium on 11 December, Glenys Kinnock MEP called in her speech for a specific children’s article in the EU Treaty. She proposed the following text for this article:

“The European Union shall take the best interests of the child into account in all actions within the existing competences of the Treaties”.

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A joint letter by the European Youth Forum and Euronet was sent to the Convention members to call upon them to take the rights and interests of the young generation and those who will inherit the new Europe into account in the work on the future of Europe. The European Youth Forum is proposing a better legal base for young people and children within the current article 149 EC-Treaty, based on the current “acquis” of the EU. This also includes that the current policies and actions of the EU directed at young people should include children below the age of 15, which is an arbitrary age set by the EU institutions and supported by many member states.

For more information on the proposals of the European Youth Forum contact Christian Meseth, Rue Joseph II 120 1000 Brussels, Belgium, Tel:+32 2 2869424, E-mail: christian.meseth@youthforum.org
CHILD POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION:
CONCLUSIONS FROM DENMARK

From 17-18 October the first European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion was organised by the Danish Presidency of the EU. Euronet was represented at this Round Table and addressed the Workshop on “tackling family and child poverty”. The Danish Presidency supported the need to address child poverty and social exclusion.

The Round Table was attended by about 300 participants, including many Government representatives, Commission officials, experts/academics and NGO representatives. There was a special working group dedicated to children and the family, at which Euronet’s report “Including Children” was presented. The conclusions of the working group were very positive and included most of Euronet’s recommendations. Among the ten points for action which were adopted by the Round Table one point addresses children: “The negative social legacy to be counteracted. Massive measures to be taken towards children and young persons.”

The Round Table was concluded by the Danish Minister of Social Affairs and Gender Equality, Henriette Kjaer, and Gabrielle Clotuche, Director for Employment and Social Affairs of the Commission. In particular the Minister for Social Affairs raised the extreme importance of addressing child poverty: “And we shall remember the children. It is extremely important that we highlight child poverty, exclusion of children and the social legacy.”

For more information consult the website of the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs http://www.sm.dk

MEETING OF EUROPEAN NGO CHILD RIGHTS NETWORKS IN LITHUANIA CALLS FOR ACTION

From 30-31 October the third regional meeting of NGO Child Rights Networks in Europe took place in Vilnius, Lithuania. At this meeting, which was attended by participants from both Western European and Eastern European countries, a call for action was adopted. The meeting called upon political decision-makers at national and European level to commit themselves to make the CRC a reality for children in Europe.

The meeting in Vilnius was attended by representatives of mainly national NGO networks from Western and Eastern Europe and several members of the Lithuanian Parliament. The meeting was organised by the Lithuanian Save the Children. At the meeting experiences in work were exchanged between the networks and there were three working groups. One on involving children in national coalitions, one on coalition building and structures and one on NGO reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Euronet was also represented and addressed the meeting on the European work for children’s rights and Euronet’s campaign for a legal base and the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe. The meeting adopted a Call for Action, which included a set of recommendations which would be given to the national governments. The recommendations also included the need for a legal base for children in the EU Treaty. The meeting agreed to send this to the European Convention members, including a list of all organisations that supported this.

For more information contact Loreta Trakinskiené, Save the Children Lithuania, Tel: (370 5) 2610 815; Fax: (370 5) 2610 837; E-mail: gelbvalk@post.onmitel.net
Save the Children in Lithuania has translated part of the Euronet report “A Children’s Policy for 21st Century Europe” into Lithuanian.

German “National Coalition” organised their fourth German Child Rights Day on 15 November in Cologne, Germany. The “National Coalition” which consists of a hundred German organisations for children organised this event around a report on the implementation of the best interests of the child (Article 3 CRC) in German law. The Report was written by the International law expert Alexander Lorz. He concluded that Article 3 CRC is ignored in Germany. Legislation which takes the best interests of the child into consideration, such as City planning, hardly exists or is not sufficient. He stated that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is ignored in Germany. According to the UN CRC public administration and courts of justice need to take the interests of children and youth into account. “The report will contribute to a better understanding of children’s rights in politics and policy making”, said Mike Corsa of the National Coalition.

For more information on the report contact: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Jugendhilfe, National Coalition; Mühlen damm 3; 10178 Berlin; Germany; Tel: +49 30 40040200; Fax: +49 30 40040232; E-mail: national-coalition@agi.de

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1 23 January 2003 — Brussels, Belgium: Launch Seminar “Invisible Children”, Presentation of Save the Children’s report on “Invisible Children” Children’s Rights in the EU and Member States Development Policy. For more information contact: Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Tel: +32 2 512 7851; Fax: +32 2 513 4903; E-mail: savechildbru@skynet.be

1 2-3 April 2003 — Brussels, Belgium: Euronet Conference, Children and the European Convention. For more information contact: Carolina Santrich, Tel: +32 2 512 4500; Fax: +32 2 513 4903; E-mail: europeanchildrenetwork@skynet.be
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