Introduction

Welcome to issue 21 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 of our Newsletter aims to update our readers on all child relevant topics and events that have taken place in Europe since the beginning of the year 2004.

You will find news on the inclusion of children’s rights in the Draft EU Constitution on the Future of Europe, and the progress of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). It also gives a report of the intergouvernemental EU Human Rights Forum in Rome, Italy and information on upcoming meetings on child-related issues organised by the Irish EU Presidency. Further news are the Commission’s report on the National Action Plans on Social Exclusion and the latest on EURONET activities. If you have questions, ideas, articles or remarks about the newsletter, please contact Mieke Schuurman or Carolina Santrich at the address above.
Children and Human Rights

EU Human Rights Forum in Rome focuses on Children’s Rights

From 10-11 December 2003 the annual EU Human Rights Forum took place in Rome. This year the Italian Presidency had decided to focus the Forum around children's rights. The meeting was divided into three working groups: child trafficking, sexual exploitation of children, and children and armed conflict. Government representatives, Commission and Council officials and NGOs were participating in the meeting including several member organisations of EURONET. Each of the working groups presented a set of recommendations to the plenary meeting. These recommendations are intended for EU members and accession states' governments.

The recommendations on child trafficking used the Brussels Declarations as a starting point and divided its proposals into four areas. Firstly, the general recommendations on the adoption and implementation of international instruments with regard to child trafficking. Secondly, recommendations in relation to prevention and co-operation, which included amongst others: awareness raising campaigns, children's rights focal point within the EU institutions, training of law enforcement personnel, and specific programmes for children belonging to minorities and disadvantaged groups. The third set of recommendations referred to victim protection and assistance, and the fourth and last one to police and judicial co-operation and organised crime.

The recommendations on the sexual exploitation of children advocated for the Second World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Yokohama to be the key reference for EU work -internally and externally- on this subject. The Yokohama Agenda for Action should be accordingly fully implemented. It was proposed that the EU should pay more attention to other forms of abuse and sexual exploitation, and that it should also fund research aimed at collecting data on sex offenders. The EU should in its relations with third countries make them aware of their international obligations to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation.

The working group on children and armed conflict discussed the new EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict that were adopted by the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 8 December 2003. These Guidelines are the very first EU policy strategy on children and thus constitute a decisive step towards the mainstreaming of children's rights throughout the EU policy agenda.
The working group welcomed the adoption of the Guidelines and recommended that the implementation of the Guidelines should be taken up with urgency and this implementation must reflect the key principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child and child participation. Additionally to the effective implementation and a follow-up, the working group also advised to ensure monitoring and reporting on the Guidelines and to continue the partnership between the EU, UN, regional organisations and civil society.

It is now of the utmost importance that European national governments as well as EU institutions, follow-up the recommendations adopted at the Human Rights Forum. For a full text of the recommendations please contact mieke.schuurman@tiscali.nl

## EP Report on Fundamental Rights in the EU

The European Parliament has been debating in January and February the Report on the Situation of Fundamental Rights in the EU in 2003, which has been drafted by Alima Boumediene-Thiery MEP. Part of the report and accompanying resolution is focussing on children’s rights, in particular in relation to poverty and social rights; trafficking; sexual abuse, and asylum law. Several of EURONET’s member organisations contributed to this report and EURONET requested the inclusion of references to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which have been included by Ms Boumediene-Thiery.

More information on the contents of this report can be found on the website of the European Parliament: [http://www.europarl.eu.int/comparl/libe/elsj/charter/default_en.htm#11](http://www.europarl.eu.int/comparl/libe/elsj/charter/default_en.htm#11)

## Updates from the EU Institutions

### Children’s Rights and the European Constitution

EURONET and its member organisations have worked hard to get children’s rights in the draft Constitution for Europe and would therefore very much support the adoption of the Constitution for Europe. In December 2003 the European Council representing the heads of state of the EU member states did not adopt the Constitution for Europe and therefore the intergovernmental conference came to an end. The current Irish Presidency is preparing a report on whether it would be feasible to start the intergovernmental conference (IGC) again and how to continue it. This report will be presented to the heads of state at their Spring Summit on 25-26 March in Ireland. It seems that there is still a list of twenty items to be reached agreement upon, mainly in the area of decision making processes. In the mean time the EU Foreign Affairs Ministers met to exchange views on the way forward for the EU Constitution.
The Ministers agreed that negotiations need urgent progress because of the forthcoming enlargement of the EU as well as the European Parliament elections.

At a meeting of the European Parliament Constitutional Committee on 17/18 February, Commissioner Barnier, Giuliano Amato and Jean-Luc Dehaene, the former vice-presidents of the Convention that drafted the European Constitution, were calling for a quick decision on the European Constitution in order to present the result to the European elections. Several MEPs raised the idea to have the European Parliament to solemnly, but symbolically adopt the text of the Constitution, in case the Spring Summit did not make a positive decision to continue with the IGC and if the IGC did not reach agreement by June 2004. This would mean an important signal for citizens.

For more information on the IGC process consult the website of the Irish Presidency or the Act4Europe group (group representing civil society) document.


Irish Presidency Activities around Children and Youth

The Irish Presidency of the European Union set off 1 January 2004 announcing the European youth as an important part of its priorities. The Irish Presidency is organising a Youth Conference from 4 to 6 March. This event will include the participation of Ministers, young people from all member states and NGO representatives. The Irish want to further the Youth White Paper objective of injecting a youth dimension into other public policy areas through agreements and written contributions from the Youth sector. The Presidency intends also to continue discussions on a new Youth Programme. One of the key issues to be raised will be the lowering of the age limit in the Youth Programme to 12 years, instead of 15 years, which is supported by Euronet.

On 22 April the Presidency will hold a meeting of the Permanent Intergovernmental Group L’Europe de l’Enfance, an informal meeting organised on a regular basis for EU-ministers and/or high-level officials holding responsibility for childhood policies. In addition to the EU-ministers and national experts on children, the Presidency holding the meeting may invite other participants such as EU Commission representatives or NGO representatives.

EURONET and its Irish member organisation ISPCC, hope to be able to participate in this meeting. The agenda for the meeting is not yet known.

For more information on the Irish Presidency work programme visit their web site at:

http://www.eu2004.ie
Youth: European Commission *White Paper*

Commissioner Reding has recently commented on the current status of the Commission’s *White Paper ‘A New Impetus for European Youth’*. The White Paper ‘A new impetus for European youth’, adopted by the Commission on 21 November 2001, proposed in particular the implementation of cooperation in the youth field, and covered four thematic priorities: ‘participation, information, voluntary activity and greater understanding and knowledge of youth’.

The Council took a positive view on the White Paper and adopted on 27 June 2002 a Resolution (1) regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field. This Resolution implements the proposals set out in the Commission’s White Paper.

On participation and information, the Commission presented a synthesis report (2) and draft common objectives (3) on the basis of suggestions from the Member States. The Council discussed these Commission documents in May 2003.

As far as the priorities ‘a greater understanding of youth’ and ‘voluntary activities’ are concerned, the Commission will proceed accordingly. Currently these two priorities are tackled by the Member States.

The White Paper on youth (COM –2001- 681 final), ‘A New Impetus for European Youth’ aims at suggesting a new framework for cooperation in youth policy. This new framework, which includes the open method of cooperation, was endorsed by the Council in its Resolution of 27 June 2002 (Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States), and applies to the four thematic political priorities: participation, information, a greater understanding of youth and voluntary activities.

White Papers published by the Commission are documents containing proposals for Community action in a specific field. If a White Paper is viewed positively by the Council it can lead to the launching of European Union action in the field concerned.

The White Paper is therefore a first step towards an enhanced cooperation in the youth field and can only deal with a certain number of thematic priorities identified by young people, thereby fully respecting the Member States’ subsidiarity in this field. The White Paper aims at giving major political orientations on youth in Europe.

EURONET produced a position paper for the review of the Youth Programmes by the Commission in February 2003. The key recommendations of this paper were to stimulate children’s participation at EU level in matters that concern them and to lower the age of children within the Youth Programme to the age of 12.
European Parliament reviews accession negotiations with Romania

On 19 February the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Foreign Affairs Committee report which reviews Romania's accession negotiations with the European Commission. The report states that Romania's hopes to join the EU are far from a "done deal." The report concludes that Romania needs a new accession strategy and that Bulgaria's EU schedule is not to be necessarily bound to the schedule of other candidate countries, namely Romania, "Bulgaria's pair", with which the European Commission used to review the two countries' pace of talks. Bulgaria is scheduled to join at the same time as Romania, in 2007.

MEPs were voting in the foreign affairs committee the report by Elmar Brok MEP on the state of preparation of the acceding/candidate countries, which is to be adopted in the plenary of 11 March.

The reports' conclusions on Romania replaces a much tougher draft proposal from the 2 European Parliament's rapporteurs for Romania, Emma Nicholson MEP and her Dutch colleague Arie Oostlander MEP, who called for the suspension of accession negotiations with Romania, until the country's reform process is put back on track.

"Romania should correctly put the reforms already undertaken into practice, and especially reinforce the rule of law. "There is a strong probability that the European Parliament will recommend accession negotiations to be frozen, should Romania fail to take additional measures", warned Ms Nicholson, who fears that the Copenhagen political criteria have still not been fulfilled in Romania. Emma Nicholson is calling upon the Romanian government to set up a "genuinely independent and impartial" legal system, to do more to fight corruption, and better defend children's rights, especially in orphanages and in adoption procedures.

Glenys Kinnock MEP calls for positive actions for children

The UK Parliamentary House Magazine published an article by Glenys Kinnock MEP on children's rights at the end of 2003. Mrs. Kinnock, member of the European Parliaments' "Children's Alliance", welcomed in this article her Government's recently issued Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' and in particular its proposal to create a Children’s Commissioner for England and some other monitoring mechanisms.
Mrs Kinnock expressed her belief on the need for positive actions to be taken at a European level to protect children. The Welsh MEP is confident that the prospect of the incorporation of the rights of the child into the EU Constitutional Treaty is "an exciting, once-in-a-generation, opportunity to influence the way we protect children - within the UK, across Europe and in our work in the developing world."

Social Exclusion: Children in the EU Report on NAPs

The Commission has published a Draft Joint Report on Social Inclusion which analyses the National Action Plans 2003-2005 (NAPs) of the EU Member States on poverty and social inclusion. The report is a follow up to the Lisbon process “to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion in the EU by 2010.” The Draft Joint Report reveals that 55 million people; or the equivalent of 15 % of the EU's population, have low incomes. It also confirms that those who are most at risk of poverty are the long-term unemployed, single parents, older people living alone and families with many children. This situation will become more challenging when the accession countries join the EU as unemployment is high in this area, and the social protection systems do not always provide secure income to those at higher risk. The report recommends Member States to focus on the prevention of early school dropping-out, and on reducing child poverty, as well as further efforts in the fight against the social exclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities. For more information visit the Commission's website at:


Internet: Commission’s Safer Internet Day to focus on children

The Safer Internet Day opened on 6 February across Europe with the aim of making the online world safer for children. Promising new filtering software was presented on this occasion. The campaign aims to raise awareness in all sectors of society (governments, Internet providers, parents and children themselves) on how to protect children in the online world.

The campaign is part of the Commission's efforts to promote a safe use of the Internet as laid out in a 1999 Action Plan.
The plan puts the emphasis on self-regulation by the Internet industry and encourages schemes to monitor harmful content such as child pornography. Software that can filter harmful content was also to be developed by the industry under the action plan.

Safer Internet Day I coincided with the promotion of POESIA (Public Open-source Environment for a Large Safer Internet Access), a software recently developed by researchers from Liverpool that can filter content in multiple languages.

**EURONET Activities**

**Child Focal Point set up by EURONET**

EURONET has set up a *Child Focal Point* as part of the work with partners across EU member States and Accession countries in promoting children's participation to identify and address the issues that concern them most as European citizens. The new forum has just set off in EURONET's web site [http://www.europeanchildrensnetwork.org](http://www.europeanchildrensnetwork.org), and children and young people from all over Europe are being invited to take part in it actively. It is foreseen that this focal point could enable children to advise EURONET on:

- How they would like to see the role of the European Union with regard to children;
- How they may become involved in programmes of the European Union;
- What mechanisms the European Union needs to develop to ensure better access for children.

EURONET acknowledges the need for children to have a say in matters that concern them, as stated in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ultimately, children must feel that the work being done by the European child advocates belongs to them. Children and young persons between the ages of 11 and 18 years are to facilitate the project, establishing a strong focal point, and leading the initial discussions so that their input can be used also as feedback to tune up and adapt the child focal point. Further, children’s views will be seriously taken on board by EURONET and be presented to the relevant representatives of the European Institutions.

The Child Focal point draws from the experiences learned at the conference “Children and the Future of Europe, Children are European citizens too” that EURONET organised in Brussels on 2 and 3 April 2003. Children came to the conference after a national consultation process to discuss relevant issues on the Future of the European Union. They had some working sessions the first day to chose representatives and present 6 key thematic subjects to the adult delegates on the next conference day. The reports of the different workshops became part of the Conference report, which EURONET considers an important document in the process of drawing up recommendations for EU policies.
Children identified poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, participation; children in institutional care; children in trafficking; health, and environment, as topics they were concerned about and needed to be discussed.

The new Child Focal point offers translation software, an interactive map of Europe set in place for children to break language barriers and a web forum to help them with their discussions as well as to advance their suggestions.

Apart from Website Forum discussions, children will also be encouraged to use their creativity when discussing European themes and a creative centre will be progressively developed once children begin to explore European subjects that interest them.

For further details on this project, please contact Carolina Santrich at europeanchildrenetwork@skynet.be

**EP Elections Campaign for Children**

The European Elections will be held between 10-13 June 2004. 732 Members of the European Parliament will be elected from 25 EU Member states. The European Parliament is the assembly of representatives of the 450 million European Union citizens. To ensure that the candidates standing for the new EP are getting aware of the rights of the children in Europe, EURONET is intending to formulate a set of **10 Demands for Children in the European Union**. These set of Demands for Children will be distributed to Candidates for the EP elections who are asked to support them once they are elected. Several of EURONET’s member organisations are already planning activities around the European elections, such as organising working visits to projects and show the European dimension in these (NSPCC, UK) or organising meetings with the candidate MEPs to inform them about children's rights issues at EU level (Save the Children Sweden).

More information on this campaign will follow in the next newsletter.

**Calls for Proposals**

- **Youth Programme**

The Commission has published a call for proposal under the Joint actions Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth programmes. The joint actions aim to encourage the development of innovative approaches in co-operation between different sectors (education, training, youth, culture) at various levels; transnational networking of different types of actors, and to remove the barriers between modes of intervention due to the structure of the individual programmes.
The call for proposals reflects the common objectives of the three programmes. The budget for the call for proposal is €4.5 million. The deadline for applications is **12 March 2004**. For more information contact the Technical Assistance Office Socrates, Leonardo and Youth, Rue de Trèves 59-61, 1040 Brussels, Belgium or it can be downloaded from the following website: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/jointact_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/jointact_en.html)

**- Social Exclusion Projects, DG Employment and Social Affairs**

The 2004 call for project proposals will be published shortly. The deadlines for 2004 are:

- 30 April 2004 for operations commencing no earlier than 1 June 2004

Please note, however, that these deadlines are still liable to change.

In the meantime, if you would like to be put on the waiting list for receiving the new call for proposals and forms as soon as possible, please send an email request to the functional mailbox at the following address: [empl-04-03-03-02@cec.eu.int](mailto:empl-04-03-03-02@cec.eu.int)

**Events / Announcements**

**4 - 6 March 2004, Ireland**: Youth Conference organised by the Irish Presidency

**11 - 12 March 2004, Portugalete, País Vasco**: Workshops “Communication and Childhood: Children’s Rights and Information Duties” organised by EDEX & la POI, Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia (Spain)

**25 – 28 March 2004 Lisbon, Portugal**: 8th European Conference of the European Association for Children in Hospital. Programme and details, [hsieber@kommtextkorr.ch](mailto:hsieber@kommtextkorr.ch)


**22 April 2004, Ireland**: L' Europe de L'Enfance meeting (Intergovernmental EU meeting on children)

**1 May 2004, European Union**: 10 New Member States accede to the European Union

**13-15 May 2004, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina**: Second Intergovernmental Conference co-organised by the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Germany on Making Europe and Central Asia "Fit for Children." This is the second time that this regional
group of governments will meet as part of the follow-up process to the World Summit for Children. The conference will focus on the implementation of the agenda of *A World Fit for Children*.

**9-2 June 2004, European Union:** European Parliament Elections

**20-22 October 2004, London, UK:** Child in the City, organised by *Child in the City Foundation*. For more information contact, Ms Sandra van Beek, tel: +31 306933 489; fax: +31 30 6917 394; email: svanbeek@europoint-bv.com; web: www.europoint-bv.com

**Websites**

**Youth and Development: Online Discussion Forum**

Youth and Development Forum is a platform for advocacy and empowerment through dialogue and knowledge sharing for effective facilitation of development of young people and their involvement in this process.

Forum's membership comprises young men and women; national youth ministries; international youth organisations; youth focal points of intergovernmental organisations; national, regional and grassroots level youth NGOs; government, intergovernmental and UN institutions; academic and research institutions; public and private agencies; and individuals. Contact: Rudy at rudes@mandatethefuture.org
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