Dear Readers,

This autumn newsletter of the European Children’s Network reports back on the EURONET General Assembly discussion on the Communication towards an EU Strategy on Children’s Rights and provides updates on the follow-up to the Communication by the European Parliament and the EESC. This issue also includes news on the UN Violence study which was launched on 11 October in New York, a report on a conference organised by ENOC (European Network of Ombudspersons for Children) in Athens in September, the latest news on the EU Constitution and a Commission study on children and mobile phones.

Activities of EURONET’s member organisations are reported, including a seminar organised by Save the Children on Child Victim identification in Images and the announcement of a live webchat for children with Commissioner Wallström on the future of Europe, as well EFSCW’s seminar on capacity expansion and exchange.

EURONET’s website is currently being completely renewed. We hope to announce the launch of the new website before the end of the year, which will be linked to CRIN. EURONET is organising a conference with UNICEF on the implementation of the UN CRC within Europe in November.

Finally I would like to welcome our new stagiaire, Tiffany Baird. She has contributed to this newsletter together with Emilie White. Please contact Tiffany if you have any questions in relation to the newsletter.

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EU child rights news at the EURONET GA 2006

The European Children’s Network General Assembly took place on the 22 September, kindly hosted by our member organisation, the European Foundation for Street Children Worldwide (EFSCW). With a high level of participation from members the meeting was deemed a success. The meeting opened with a discussion session on the Commission’s Communication on children’s rights with speeches from the newly appointed Commission Coordinator for the Rights of the Child in DG Civil Justice, Rights & Citizenship, Patrick Trousson, and Noora Heinonen from the Finnish Permanent Representation to the EU. Unfortunately Edit Bauer, MEP had to make a last-minute cancellation. Trousson regretted that due to budget limitations, there will be a delay in implementing the proposed activities set out in the Communication and that more will be known in mid-2007. However, some activities will be started soon, such as the establishment of a European Forum, which will be an advisory group to the Commission, and the setting up of an informative website on children’s rights. Heinonen said that the Finnish Presidency welcomed the Communication and supports its proposals. The Communication will be discussed in the Council fundamental rights working group. Heinonen said there are four corner stones for the Communication which make it important; it includes European values; it demands commitment from EU institutions and from us; it is an example of visibility as what we see as important; and it is one of the key areas that is close to citizens’ hearts.
Communication Follow-up: European Parliament report

The Communication towards a strategy on children's rights was presented in September to the intergroup on "family and protection of childhood" in the European Parliament by Commissioner Frattini in Strasbourg. He stressed the importance of the implementation of the UNCRC in Europe and the need for active participation of children in the implementation of the communication. The European Parliament will write a report on the Communication with input from different committees from within the Parliament. Ms Angelilli, Italian MEP, has been appointed rapporteur for the report within the Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs Committee (LIBE). EURONET will, together with other civil society organisations in Brussels, campaign to ensure that the Communication will be properly implemented and that children's rights as laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child will be respected by the EU in all its actions.

EESC report on the Communication

On September 7th, EURONET was invited to take part in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) meeting to discuss their response to the Commission's Communication "Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child" within the study group on the Communication. Commission representative, Patrick Trousson presented the Communication highlighting that children's rights must be addressed at EU level in line with existing international instruments. In response to questions on the dangers of focusing on children as victims instead of the everyday rights of children, Trousson replied that including child participation in the proposed European Forum should reveal the everyday problems which children would like to see tackled. He also said that the inter-service group would examine all directives and legislations issuing from the Commission to ensure that children's rights are duly taken into account. In response to concerns over funding, Trousson explained that a budget line could not be created as the response to concerns over funding, Trousson explained that a budget line could not be created without a legal basis; however the Commission will use existing projects such as Daphne, the Fundamental Rights Programme and the Judicial Cooperation on Family Matters to channel resources towards children's rights activities. The rapporteur, Mrs. Van Turnhout presented her draft expressing support for a collaborative approach including children and children's organisations, without forgetting the need for member states to recognise their responsibility for action. The draft includes calls for a Commissioner for children's rights and stronger measures to implement transnational cooperation in checking criminal records of professions working with children, as well as expressing disappointment at the lack of emphasis on the need for Member States to implement their existing commitments, engage with each other and exchange best practice during the debate, the study group decided to include calls for appointing an ombudsman for children for each member state, strengthening family law, and banning corporal punishment in all member states along the lines set out in EURONET's report "What about us? Children's Rights in the European Union, Next Steps". EURONET, as one of two NGOs invited to the meeting along with Eurochild, was asked to present its organisation and was thanked for input from the report which was distributed at the meeting. The study group called for further written comments to be incorporated into the next draft of the report, with the aim of adopting an opinion in December 2006.

Commission Consultation on Children and Mobile phones

The European Commission ran a public consultation on the dangers of mobile phones to children from July 25 to October 16. With such high use of mobile phones, including those with photo and video features, young people are exposed to negative influences such as violent or sexually explicit images, abusive messages and images, and contact from strangers wishing to meet children, although health risks will not be examined in this context. Following the consultation the Commission will look at possible protective regulations and technical solutions.

EU Constitution Update

As the EU Constitution debate continues, two individuals, Commission Vice-President, Margot Wallström, and UK MEP, Andrew Duff, presented their views last week on what actions they believe should be taken. Margot Wallström discussed the need to keep the 'core of the Constitutional Treaty' as it is, using it as a 'departure point'. The core includes issues such as majority voting rules, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, increased powers for Parliament, and the citizen's initiative. Andrew Duff proposed a "Plan B" for the Constitutional Treaty. This proposal includes making Parts I and II permanent, with more emphasis on the Charter of Fundamental Rights. He sees Part III as the main area for addressing citizens concerns, namely economic governance, Europe's social model, the environment, enlargement, and EU finance reform. Part I and II contain references to children's rights and should remain in the constitution according to Euronet.
UN Violence Against Children Study

On 11 October, the United Nations Secretary General presented the UN study report on Violence Against Children to the UN General Assembly. As the first attempt to document the extent of worldwide violence against children, the report focuses on five locations of violence: in the home and family, in educational settings and schools, in care and justice systems, in the community, and at work. The study is a joint initiative supported by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO) and was drafted with the involvement of nine regional consultations, government and public submissions as well as child participation. The Independent Expert responsible for the report, Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro also wrote a book “The World Report on Violence against children” which adds greater detail to his findings, along with recommendations and child friendly materials. The study concludes that violence against children is universal and occurs at levels and to every degree, with most incidents of violence inflicted by people known and trusted by the child. The report stresses that violence against children includes physical and psychological violence, discrimination, neglect and maltreatment all of which often cause damaging repercussions for children.

NGOs response to UN Study Against Violence

On September 5th EURONET, as part of a group of Brussels-based NGOs campaigning for children's rights, met with Professor Pinheiro, Special Rapporteur for the UN Study on Violence Against Children, to plan NGO action to ensure member country support for implementing Pinheiro's recommendations. Pinheiro asked NGOs to put pressure on the EU to support the recommendations. With this aim, the NGO group sent a statement to key EU representatives stressing the EU’s crucial role in ending all forms of violence against children both within and outside Europe by banning all forms of violence against children, supporting the appointment of a UN Special Representative on the Elimination of Violence against Children, and creating mechanisms to involve children in the formation of policies combating violence.

World Bank: Development & the Next Generation

EURONET attended the World Bank roundtable launching their World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation on the 12th of September. The roundtable was attended by a variety of NGOs covering development and youth issues. The report focuses on three main areas: opportunities, capabilities and second chances for 12-24 year olds who are considered as entering the transition age range from puberty to economic independence. The report makes broad recommendations for the World Bank including better coordination and integration with national policy, offering a stronger voice to young people and stronger evaluation of youth-oriented programmes.

Ombudwork Conference for Children, Athens

From the 29 to 30 September, Zuzana Baudysova, a EURONET Board Member and the Director of Our Child Foundation in Prague, attended the Ombudwork Conference for Children. The conference was held in Athens and organized by the Commissioners for Human Rights of the Russian Federation and the Council of Europe, as well as Yorgo Kaminis, a Greek Ombudsman. The focus of the conference was the establishment of independent children’s rights offices in all European countries, with the reality that there will need to be a different model in each country. Also discussed was the possibility of the extension of ombudsmen’s instruments for the protection and promotion of children's rights within certain limits. Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg (Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg) examined the differences between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and European countries’ practice of respecting these rights. He also spoke about the intention of the Council of Europe to ban all forms of corporal punishment of children. Additionally, Greek school children (both primary and secondary) performed various scenarios with the help of their teachers, demonstrating how children’s rights can be violated. More than 20 of the conference participants were from the former Soviet Union and were very interested in the publication, ‘What about us? Children Rights in the EU - Next Steps”, which Zuzana had taken with her. The ombudsmen are members of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), which was founded in 1997. ENOC links independent offices in Europe that work to promote the rights of children, with the aim of improving the lives of all children in Europe.

Thanks to Zuzana Baudysova
Building A Europe For Children

Member Input: EFSCW

Thank you to the European Foundation for Street Children Worldwide (EFSCW) for providing Member Input.

EFSCW

Photo Exhibition EFSCW in collaboration with the photographer Ton Hendriks

The Wax Club – Brussels, 7 July 2006

The social phenomenon of children working and living in the street is a phenomenon that most of the general public is unaware of. Minors living in these conditions are often resented, distrusted or feared. Little is known about the circumstances that lead to the plight of these children or about the living conditions of these minors who continue to be denied their basic human rights in Europe and beyond. The European Foundation for Street Children Worldwide, in its mission and commitment to improve the lives of children at risk, uphold their rights, and raise awareness of the problems they face has recently organised a photo exhibition featuring street children pictures in Bolivia and Ghana in collaboration with the Dutch photographer Ton Hendriks, who specialises in photographic portraits of street children around the world. The exhibition, which brought approximately 50 stakeholders concerned with the issue together in the recently inaugurated Brussels Wax Club, was a success. The event increased public and political awareness of street children and let to many fruitful exchanges among its participants. Among the attendees were representatives from the European and International Institutions, regional governments of EU Member States, and other social and humanitarian organizations. The Foundation was particularly satisfied with the great interest and support of the media. As such, AGENCE EUROPE published an article "Street Children Come to Brussels" on 25 July 2006. During the event, the Belgian radio station RADIO BRUXELLES broadcasted a live interview with EFSCW’s director, Reinhold Müller, available on the EFSCW website in September 2006. In conclusion, it can be said that the event represented an important step towards a better understanding and increased awareness of street children and the high vulnerability of this group. The European Foundation for Street Children Worldwide is currently planning further events and campaigns such as an AIDS campaign in 2007 aimed at benefitting children and youth at risk focusing particularly on street children as well as on the furtherance of EFSCW’s organisational objectives and goals.

Member Input: EFSCW

Capacity Expansion & Exchange Seminar

The European Foundation for Street Children Worldwide has recently published a report on the seminar on Capacity Expansion and Exchange Seminar: Social intervention methods for street children with a special emphasis on third-world scenarios organised on its premises on 31 May-1 June in Brussels. During the seminar knowledge transfer about the modern methods of social workers and street workers with the objective of supplying sustainable support and integration for street children were emphasised. Special attention was given to illustrating successful methods of intervention in crisis situations (interdisciplinary approach with regard to psychological, medical and social aspects). Community-based approaches were also introduced, which include a view to the systematic and sustained reintegration of all factors influencing and identifying individuals in their immediate surroundings, the extended social environment and, above all, taking into account the viewpoint of children and young people. The methods of Mobile Youth Work were presented. Special emphasis was placed on the third world and developing countries, which are often characterised by insufficient or non-existent security, poor educational and health systems, and having vulnerable children who are at high risk of being affected by epidemic diseases (AIDS/HIV), child-trafficking, and sexual abuse. The methods were also used to inform the attendees about the social phenomenon of children working and living in the street and the urgent need for programmes and tools that could help them. The European Foundation for Street Children Worldwide is currently planning further events and campaigns such as an AIDS campaign in 2007 aimed at benefitting children and youth at risk focusing particularly on street children as well as on the furtherance of EFSCW’s organisational objectives and goals.

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On 13 and 14 November the European Children’s Network and UNICEF is holding its second joint meeting in Florence, Italy. This time the subject is the implementation of the UN CRC in the European Union and Candidate Countries. Several studies on this will be presented by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, ChildONEurope (a Network of European Observatories on children’s rights), the EU Network of independent experts on fundamental rights and the Council of Europe. At the same time moving forward with the Communication towards a strategy on children’s rights will be discussed with participants from NGOs, the UN, the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States. A Florence call for Action will be adopted at the end of the first day.

The second day of the meeting will focus on A World Fit for Children +5, which was adopted five years ago by the United Nations Special Session on Children’s Rights. It will look at European good practices and innovations, but also on issues of concern within Europe. The result of the second day will be fed into the report to the General Assembly of the UN on the World Fit for Children +5. The next newsletter will give a full report of the meeting.

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Save the Children Global Campaign to Rewrite the Future

On 12th September, Save the Children launched its global challenge, Rewrite the Future, to get access to primary education for millions of children living in countries affected by armed conflict. Currently 43 million of the 115 million children out of school live in conflict-affected countries. Save the Children’s campaign will also aim to improve the quality of education for children. With the support of figures such as the EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, the campaign will reach out to governments and international institutions to increase funding for education in conflicted affected countries.

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On October 10th Save the Children Europe Group launched their report entitled Visible Evidence - Forgotten Children on identification of children photographed for child abuse images at a seminar hosted by Baroness Nicholson, MEP at the European Parliament. The report highlights that despite a wealth of photographic evidence few victims are identified and given the protection and care they require, and that more needs to be done at the national, EU and international level to address this imbalance. Among the seven key recommendations, Save the Children calls for political commitment, improved international and inter-agency cooperation, allocation of financial, technical and human resources, child protection training, and support for academic and statistical research. The seminar, at which EURONET was present, was attended by experts on victim identification including speakers from Interpol, the founder of the COPINE project (Combating Paedophile Information Networks in Europe), the Children’s High Level Group, and the European Commission. The seminar discussions identified obstacles as well as examples of good practice. Anders Persson from Interpol acknowledged that out of over 200,000 images they have identified only 500 of the victims, and that even this would not have been possible without international inter-agency cooperation. Similarly, it has been accepted within the Greater Manchester Police in the UK that better cooperation with civilian social workers provides a more victim-centred approach to investigations, an example which is being piloted in other countries. Pierre-Paul Sonnag spoke about Commission activities to tackle this problem including the 45 million euro project: the Safer Internet Plus programme. In conclusion, it was agreed that there is a real need for more staff and training in all areas of victim identification and that there must be a more victim-oriented child rights approach to investigations.

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**Events to look out for**

Florence, Italy: 13-14 November; UN-European Children’s Network meeting on children’s rights in Europe. Contact: Mieke Schuurman, mieke.schuurman@tiscali.nl

Berlin, Germany: 14-16 November; AJG-Eurochild Conference, Policy and Practice for social inclusion of children and young people, www.agj.de/registration

Brussels, Belgium: 20 November; Save the Children Brussels live webcast with 5 young people and Margot Wallström. Contact: Olivia Lind Haldorsson, olivia-savechildrbu@skynet.be

Helsinki, Finland: 22 November; Save the Children Finland conference, Borders of the European Union: OPEN OR CLOSED?, Email: leena.karjalainen@savethechildren.fi

Brussels, Belgium: 29 November; 2006 NSPCC European Parliament Reception and Roundtable, Contact: Karen Keenan, events@nspcc.org.uk

Brussels, Belgium: 30 November; European Child Safety Alliance of EuroSafe, launch of European Home Safety Campaign, Info: www.childsafetyeurope.org

Brussels, Belgium: 8 December; EASPD seminar, Entitlement to Education, principles into practice. The Salamanca declaration, 12 years later. Register: www.easpd.org

**Recent Publications**


UN Secretary General. *UN Study Report on Violence Against Children*, October 2006.

Save the Children. *Visible Evidence - Forgotten Children*, October 2006

**Member’s Corner**

If you have any stories, facts, figures, events or publications you would like to publish on the Euronet newsletter do not hesitate to contact us at europeanchilenetwork@skynet.be

**Member Spotlight**


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**Member Spotlight**


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