Dear Readers,

Welcome to our spring newsletter 2007. This newsletter provides an update on the work done by the European Children’s Network and the EU institutions on the Communication towards a European strategy on children’s rights. The European Parliament is planning to hold a hearing on the Communication on 17 April. The Commission, in cooperation with the German EU Presidency, is planning the first European Forum for 4 June in Berlin. The newly set-up Fundamental Rights Agency, the revision of the TV without frontiers directive, the evaluation of the Finnish Presidency and other EU news affecting children’s rights are also covered.

EURONET is delighted with the launch of the new website in January. The website gives information on EURONET’s activities and reports, publications and press releases, a member’s section and a section for children, including information on the consultation for children on the European strategy on children’s rights.

EURONET is happy to welcome SOS Children’s Villages (SOS KD) as its newest member with whom we are looking forward to strong and fruitful cooperation. Information on their activities can be found in this newsletter.

Finally, EURONET is very happy to welcome Emilie White as its new public affairs and project manager.

This newsletter has been written by Emilie White, Tiffany Baird and Mieke Schuurman. For questions on the newsletter please contact Emilie White at europeanchildrennetwork@skynet.be

Editorial by the Secretary General, Mieke Schuurman

EURONET’s new website will keep individuals and organisations informed on the latest EU child rights activities and developments. The website includes information on EURONET’s EU policy areas, including the EU Treaties, the Fundamental Rights Agency, the 2006 Commission Communication, the EU Presidencies, Children’s Participation, and discrimination and social exclusion of children.

The website contains information about the European Children’s Network, membership and member organisations, with information and links to their work at national level. It offers immediate access to publications since 1997. The website provides the latest EURONET and child rights-related news, events, and links for more information.

The Members-Only section provides access to internal documents. Members who have not received the password should contact EURONET.

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) hosts a direct link to the website on its homepage, giving those working on children’s rights direct access to children’s rights news at EU level. EURONET is open to comments and suggestions about the improvement of the website. Some sections will be further elaborated in the coming months.

Questions or Comments? Email us at: europeanchildrennetwork@skynet.be
EU Fundamental Rights Agency a Step Forward for Children’s Rights

The European Children’s Network issued a press release welcoming the launch of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency on March 1, urging the agency to play an active role in the forthcoming EU child rights strategy. “It should put particular emphasis on children’s rights in its work programme, including by collecting information on children’s rights in Europe,” highlighted Mieke Schuurman, Secretary General of the network, who also welcomed the commitment to close cooperation with NGOs and the Council of Europe.

The new agency succeeds the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia with an initial budget of €14 million, reaching €30 million by 2013. Functioning as an independent Community agency, it will provide expertise relating to fundamental rights to the EU institutions and Member States acting as a data collection and analysis body, with the capacity to issue advice through the publication of conclusions and opinions, as well as annual and thematic reports.

The agency has committed to strong cooperation with civil society and raising public awareness through the development of a communication strategy promoting dialogue. This will be facilitated by the creation of a Fundamental Rights Platform, a mechanism for information exchange. The agency will also cooperate with OSCE and UN agencies as well as Member States, including their national human rights institutions, and related European institutions.

Despite receiving criticism the agency will not be involving police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters and will instead focus on such issues as discrimination and domestic violence. However, a ministerial review will re-examine the possibility of including cooperation in criminal matters in 2009.

For further information, click here

Council backs UN Violence Study

The Council of Europe led the European launch of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children in January, calling for European governments to put every effort into making a better life for children and act on the findings of the UN report. The launch followed a debate in The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on its report on Child victims: stamping out all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse of child victims”, which calls for further measures to be taken to protect children from violence. The debate resulted in the adoption of a resolution on child victims: stamping out all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse.

The report supports the Council’s “Building a Europe for and with Children” programme to promote children’s rights, protect children from violence and ensure active child participation. EURONET supports the conclusions of the UN Study on Violence against children and the Council of Europe Programme. The combating of violence against children, in particular the banning of corporal punishment of children across Europe will be a key priority for EURONET’s work in the coming years.

Member Input: Save the Children Consultation with Children

Save the Children, with support of the European Parliament, is organising a consultation on the EC Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child”. The aim of this consultation is to support children and young people to say what they think about how the EC Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child” should be put into action and how they would like to participate in activities to achieve its objectives. The consultation is carried out with the support of the European Parliament rapporteur on the Communication, Ms. Roberta Angelilli. The results of the consultation will be presented to the European Parliament in April, with the hopes that children’s views will feed into the final EP report on the Communication.

The consultation will run from 5 February – 30 March 2007 and is based around a questionnaire which will be made available in several languages. Child friendly versions of the Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child” should be put into action and how they would like to participate in activities to achieve its objectives. The consultation is carried out with the support of the European Parliament rapporteur on the Communication, Ms. Roberta Angelilli. The results of the consultation will be presented to the European Parliament in April, with the hopes that children’s views will feed into the final EP report on the Communication.

The consultation is aimed at children and young people in the 13-17 years age range. Save the Children invites all relevant stakeholders to promote and/or to organise national consultations with children. All contributions will be acknowledged.

If you would like to join the consultation or find out more, please click here for the website or contact olivia.lind@savethechildren.be.
EU: Moving Forward on Children’s Rights

Communication Update

EURONET, as part of the NGO Action group of NGOs working on the communication on children’s rights, met with members of l’Europe de l’Enfance and the Commission’s child rights coordinator in Brussels in March to discuss the European Forum to be held on 4 June in Berlin. The Forum will be organised by the Commission in cooperation with the German Presidency and will involve all the different EU actors, including representatives from Member States, the Commission, the European Parliament, international organisations, children’s ombudspersons and children’s NGOs. EURONET and the Action group of NGOS have called for a transparent and well-prepared Forum, in particular with regard to the aims, mandate and outputs of the Forum. The selection of organisations and institutions must also be well prepared along with methods ensuring the meaningful participation of children.

EURONET has continued to meet regularly with Commission officials and MEPs to discuss the communication, particularly with reference to the Hearing on children’s rights taking place on April 17 in the European Parliament, to which our members are strongly encouraged to participate.

EURONET has prepared a briefing on the Communication entitled "Children are European Citizens Too" which includes information on why a European strategy on children’s rights is necessary, the link between children’s rights and the role of the family, and the complementarity of member states’ competences on children’s rights. The briefing is intended for Members of national and European Parliaments and national governments.

In addition, Glenys Kinnock, MEP, submitted a written question to the European Commission raising concerns about the process in setting up the European Forum on the rights of the child. To read the question click here

For more information on the Communication and EURONET’s work on it, contact Mieke Schuurman: mieke.schuurman@tiscali.nl

EU to fund children’s NGOs

Due to efforts of the European Children’s Network in cooperation with Members of the European Parliament, an amendment was adopted on the EU Budget for 2007 to include a reference “to fund activities of networks of NGOs which promote the rights of children” within the fundamental rights and citizenship programme. EURONET is in particular grateful to Ms. Jean Lambert, who tabled the amendment, Gérard Deprez MEP and Jan Mulder MEP.

Final Comments from the Finnish Presidency

In an evaluation by the Finnish Presidency of their work in relation to children’s rights, the Finns welcomed the communication as important for the wellbeing of children. The communication was discussed in several working groups as well as in the l’Europe de l’Enfance meeting in Helsinki last November. The evaluation outlined the following points:

- Clarity is needed on the role, actions and participants of the forthcoming European Forum
- Further information on timetables and details of proposed actions by the Commission is needed
- The role of EU actors, particularly the Council is not clear; despite the lack of a Treaty base for legislation, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament are discussing their opinions on the Communication
- The “umbrella policy” described in the Communication is not new, discussions and actions have already been placed in several sectoral policy fields, e.g. trafficking in human beings, public health (the Budapest process), education and violence (the Daphne III programme), and in this way the Council and/or especially the Member States have room for manoeuvre
- Further discussion is needed on the relationship between the European Forum and L’Europe de l’Enfance
- The role of NGOs is important, yet remains unclear in EU level discussions, while it has been recognized that ChildOnEurope and EURONET have been active in this field.

EURONET enjoyed a high level of cooperation with the Finnish Permanent Representation in Brussels.
The Next 50 Years for Children’s Rights in Europe?

The European Children’s Network issued a press release on the occasion of the EU’s 50th birthday calling on leaders to put children’s rights at the heart of the EU’s policies. “Children’s rights are affected by many actions of the European Union and need therefore to be taken into account in these actions.” said Simone Ek, President of EURONET.

A growing number of Europe’s 100 million children are affected by EU activities, including in the fields of poverty and social inclusion, health and consumer protection and international development. Cross-border cooperation is also needed for internet crime and child trafficking. For these reasons, “it is essential that children’s rights remain included in any newly negotiated EU Treaty,” added Mieke Schuurman, Secretary General.

For press release, click here. For further information, contact Mieke Schuurman: mieke.schuurman@tiscali.nl

EU Constitutional Debate re-launched on EU’s 50th Birthday

Build on, and address the people’s concerns: this was the conclusion issuing from the European Parliament’s constitutional affairs committee meeting on February 28. The committee reached a broad consensus on preserving the essence of the EU’s draft constitutional treaty, with changes to the language to gain public support. The meeting was called to discuss the outcome of a conference of EU Member states which have already ratified the draft constitution, held in Madrid earlier this year.

The aim of the controversial Madrid conference, which threatened to polarize opinion, was to show a commitment to European citizens to end the current deadlock, and to recall that the draft constitution has already been approved by 18 member states, representing sixty per cent of the EU population, and rejected only by two.

The Madrid initiative was supported by a majority of the committee members with broad agreement on preserving the substance of the draft treaty and addressing the concerns of EU citizens. There was support for the German Presidency’s plans, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s bilateral consultations with member states, and the presentation of a road map for the EU Constitution in June with the aim of ratifying a text before the European Parliament elections in 2009.

The German Presidency hopes to reach out to citizens with the Berlin Declaration, celebrating the EU’s 50th anniversary, and giving new impetus to a future Treaty. The German Presidency is planning to set up an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) in June, where member states will decide on the future treaty. The label ‘Constitution’ will be dropped, with the idea of signing a new treaty at the December EU Summit and allowing 12-14 months for ratification before the European elections in 2009.

EURONET will continue to monitor developments and lobby for the preservation of references to children’s rights in a new treaty.

European Parliament votes against alcohol advertising ban

In December last year EURONET joined a group of NGOs in their Not before 9 campaign to ban alcohol advertising on TV before 21h00 as an amendment to the former TV without Frontiers Directive, now called the Audiovisual Directive, of which one of the key principles is the protection of children and minors from harmful content. EURONET believes that where the new directive affects children it should take a children’s rights approach based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The group presented the argument that before 21h00 programming is largely for a family audience and most alcohol adverts are unsuitable for children and family viewing. This was supported by data linking alcohol and domestic violence, child abuse and neglect in a report from the Institute of Alcohol Studies: Alcohol in Europe. Despite these efforts the amendment was not adopted. The campaign led to 185 votes in favour of the amendment, but 428 MEPs voted against. However, achieving 30 per cent in favour was seen as some achievement considering the small time frame and urgency of the campaign.

For more information, click here.

Social Values & Democracy

As a member, EURONET attended the Social Platform’s annual conference, Social Values and Democracy: Renewing the guiding principles of the European Union, on 5-6 December in Brussels. The conference addressed two key questions: Social values in EU politics: are we moving forwards or backwards? and Would the EU be more social if it were more democratic?

A series of workshops examined key issues around the European social model. The Wealth in Europe workshop discussed the lack of data, with only Germany and Austria compiling wealth...
and poverty reports in their respective countries. The ethical and conceptual questions in relation to wealth both in Europe and abroad were debated, including the lack of a definition of wealth, and overcoming social polarization.

A workshop on Migration in Europe focused on three themes: access to the labour market, education, and participation in public life. In addition, recommendations were made on access to labour and education of migrant and Roma children, including encouraging the Social Platform to work in the field of education, both in the host country and in the migrant society; and lobbying the Commission to foster a bottom-up approach so that the programmes fulfill the needs of Roma at the grassroots level and not vice versa.

For more information, please visit the Social Platform website.

NSPCC focus on trafficking at the European Parliament

EURONET member organisation, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), hosted a round-table at the European Parliament in November.

The discussion, entitled “Exploited, vulnerable, alone: Learning from experiences of trafficked children and young people” was hosted by NSPCC director Mary Marsh and Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, MEP.

The event prompted debate on what the EU should do to protect children from trafficking in Europe with speakers including three MEPs: Edit Bauer, Simon Coveney and Jean Lambert and Maria-Grazia Giammarino from the European Commission.

The roundtable was followed by a joint reception with EURONET at the European Parliament, enabling further informal discussion.

The EU Annual Report on Human Rights discusses the EU’s policies and actions regarding human rights, both internally and externally. The most recent report covered July 2005 to June 2006 and includes references to children’s rights in several sections, stating that "children’s rights form part of the human rights that the EU and the Member States are bound to respect under international and European treaties...”.

Section 4.3 of the report discusses the Commission’s recent Communication and states that it “marks the launch of a long-term strategy to ensure that EU action promotes and safeguards children's rights and to support the efforts of EU Member States in the field”. This section also discusses issues of child poverty, social exclusion, migration, safety, trafficking, family law, and children’s rights in the context of enlargement.

Regarding enlargement, the report calls children’s rights an "integral element of the common European value" which need to be respected in candidate countries and discusses how the Commission puts a high importance on projects that aim to improve the situation and rights of children in candidate countries. Additionally, the report emphasizes the need to give more assistance to Roma children. It gives detailed information regarding the Romanian government’s work on this issue and also discusses a recent report by the EU Network of Independent Experts on Fundamental Rights that raised concerns about the inclusion of Roma children, particularly in schools.

Focusing on specific countries, the reviews of Bulgaria and Romania included specific references to each country’s work with respect to children’s rights and identified areas for improvement and follow-up. The report states that Bulgaria has introduced laws on child protection and has recognized the need to improve the social inclusion of the Roma. Romania has ratified all of the main human rights conventions and has also introduced laws on child protection.

For full report, click here.
European Parliament: Does Europe Protect Her Kids?

EURONET was present at the "Does Europe Protect Her Kids?" conference at the European Parliament last November.

The conference included speakers from UNICEF Romania, the University of Louvain, NGOs, MEPs and young people from Romania. The topics for discussion included international adoption, and the EU’s responsibility towards children, which led to considerable debate.

Prof. Kevin Browne from the WHO collaborating centre on child care and protection, who also spoke at the UN-EURONET Florence conference last November, presented his report on children in institutions in Europe.

For the report, click here
Events to look out for in 2007

More information on the events listed below can be found on EURONET's Events section of its new website.


Brussels, 17 April. European Economic and Social Committee. European Seminar on Social Economy and Equal Opportunities.


Czech Republic, 5-7 September. International Council for Children’s Play. 24th World Play Conference.

Recent Publications

Feb. 2007, EURONET Briefing “Children are European Citizens Too”. Briefing for MPs and MEPs on why a European Strategy on children’s rights is necessary.


*members who have not received their password by post should send an e-mail to europeanchildrenetwork@skynet.be.

Member Spotlight

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SOS Children’s Villages is the umbrella organisation for more than 130 affiliated national SOS Children’s Village associations worldwide. It takes action for children as an independent, non-governmental and non-denominational social development organisation by providing family-based care for children who have lost their parents or can no longer live with them.

At the European level, it promotes and supports children’s rights and the principles and standards of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this context, SOS Children’s Villages is actively involved in the development of children policies in Europe, in particular in the field of children without parental care.