Dear Readers,

EDITORIAL BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL, MIEKE SCHUURMAN

Yesterday we celebrated the 18th birthday of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Within the European Union, the first steps have been made to implement children's rights with the Communication Towards a Strategy on the Rights of the Child, however, much work is still needed to develop this strategy and to ensure that children's rights are taken into account in all EU actions that affect them. Information on EURONET's press work on the 18th birthday, as well as other activities to ensure the implementation of the UN CRC, can be found in this newsletter.

This past October EURONET co-hosted with Eurochild, organised a successful meeting in the European Parliament on mainstreaming children's rights in EU policy, which Inger Segelström MEP kindly offered to host. The key outcomes of the meeting were that the European Parliament should hold the EC accountable to its commitments and apply pressure to ensure the necessary political leadership to implement children's rights. The European Parliament should support this process by campaigning for a specific budget line to guarantee the implementation of the Commission Communication Towards a Strategy on Children's Rights. More information on the debates and outcomes of this meeting can be read in this newsletter.

This newsletter also contains significant information on violence against children, with reports on the EURONET General Assembly Day of Discussion on violence against children, the follow-up to the UN Study on Violence against Children, the start of the Council of Europe Campaign to combat corporal punishment and the outcomes of the European Council of Ministers of Justice on child protection.

EURONET has been actively involved in the debates on the Multi-Annual framework of the Fundamental Rights Agency and is very pleased that this framework includes the protection of children's rights. EURONET continues to insist that a reference to the UN CRC should be included as well. EURONET has been campaigning for this and some other changes with the European Parliament and the Portuguese EU Presidency.

Finally, EURONET is delighted to welcome its new stagiaire Juliane Kube to our office.

Mieke Schuurman
Secretary-General
European Children's Network (EURONET)

18th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child celebrated its 18th anniversary on 20 November. The Convention was ratified by all UN member states—except the United States and Somalia—and guarantees every child certain minimum rights with regard to education, development, participation, non-discrimination, the right to protection and much more.

Although a lot of countries signed the Convention, they often refer to it only in theory. Child rights' violations are not only present in third world countries, but also in the Western hemisphere, as Mieke Schuurman from the European Children's Network pointed out in an interview with the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung (published 19 November 2007). EURONET was interviewed by Radio Netherlands Worldwide to comment on the anniversary of the UN CRC and its impact on Europe.

The NGO Action Group on the EU's Child Rights Strategy (CRA), of which EURONET is a member, released a
EURONET welcomes the new Lisbon Treaty

The New Reform Treaty has been adopted by the European leaders in Portugal. EURONET released a press statement on 23 October on the Lisbon Treaty, in which EURONET highlights the fact that for the first time, children’s rights have been included in the text (Charter of Fundamental Rights).

Please find the EURONET press release at www.europchildrensnetwork.eu.

Mainstreaming Children’s Rights in EU Policy conference

The European Children’s Network (EURONET) and Eurochild held a conference on Mainstreaming Children’s Rights in EU Policy on 9 October 2007, chaired by Inger Segelström, MEP (Sweden), in which the EU Parliament, the European Commission and NGO representatives from around the European Union participated.

EURONET and Eurochild members discussed examples of good practice, and three key recommendations were made to the European Parliament to ensure the mainstreaming of children’s rights as laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These are:

1. The European Parliament should campaign for a specific budget to be allocated to the implementation of the Communication to enable the EC to fulfill its commitment;
2. The European Parliament must hold the EC accountable to its commitments and put pressure on the EC to ensure the necessary political leadership that will implement children’s rights;
3. The European Parliament should set up an intergroup or similar body specifically to work on children’s rights and to coordinate its activities in this area.

Speakers at the meeting included Margaret Wachenfeld, Senior Policy Adviser at UNICEF, Jaap Doek, former Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Kathleen Marshall, Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People (ENOC), and Maria Collins, from the European Women's Lobby. Contributions were made on what already exists and what is missing at the EU level by representatives of the European Commission, the Fundamental Rights Agency and the Council of Europe. Scottish Commissioner Marshall, EURONET members and Eurochild members discussed examples of good practice, and insisted that the mainstreaming of children’s rights should become expected and foundational, not an add-on. Collins from the Women's Lobby presented the successfully implemented gender mainstreaming, which has served as a possible model for the mainstreaming of children’s rights.

Please access EURONET's MAINSTREAMING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS web site for a full briefing on the conference.

Violence against Children: EURONET General Assembly Day of Discussion

The European Children’s Network held a day of discussion with its member organisations on the topic of violence against children at its 2007 General Assembly meeting in Brussels. Speakers included Jaap Doek, former Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Ana de Oliveira e Silva from the Portuguese Permanent Representation, and Almudena Morante and Benedetta Turdo from the European Commission, DG Justice, Freedom and Security (JLS), responsible for the DAPHNE III funding programme.

Doek emphasized that the UN Study on Violence against Children was not just an academic study, but was made to be implemented, and he therefore encouraged EURONET members to take specific, customized action with their national governments to reach the goal of abolishing all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment. Doek noted the importance of having child helplines available in every country, so that children have the ability to reach out to those able to help them.

De Oliveira e Silva from the Portuguese Permanent Representation to the EU in charge of the Fundamental Rights ad hoc working group that deals with the Fundamental Rights Agency, informed EURONET members it was important to the Portuguese Presidency to keep children’s rights in the Lisbon Treaty and to protect children. De Oliveira e Silva took comments and questions from the members to pass on to the Portuguese Permanent Representation.

Almudena Morante and Benedetta Turdo from the European Commission (DG JLS) gave a detailed presentation on DAPHNE III, the funding programme committed to fighting violence against children by spreading knowledge.
on DAPHNE III, the funding programme committed to fighting violence against children by spreading knowledge and promoting work that combats violence against children. Morante and Turdo shared information with EURONET members about the application procedure for Daphne III and the entire set up of the programme, which is accessible to NGOs, local and regional public authorities, and institutions.

EURONET board member Louise King (Save the Children UK) gave an overview on EU legislation on physical and humiliating punishment and exhibited 17 countries which have a full prohibition on physical and humiliating punishment in the law. EURONET member Save the Children Romania’s Secretary General Gabriela Alexandrescu discussed Save the Children Romania’s campaign for banning all forms of violence against children in Romania, which now focuses on awareness raising in the media.

The EURONET General Assembly day of discussion included fruitful discussion and debate in workshops on violence against children, in which strengthening capacity regarding banning physical and humiliating punishment of children and the EU’s role in implementing the UN Study on violence against children were the center of discussion. EURONET members shared experiences between NGOs on campaigning and public awareness raising and also considered EURONET’s next moves forward in this area of work.

EURONET Presents Topic of Age Discrimination against Children at Torino Conference

EURONET Secretary General Mieke Schuurman presented the topic of age discrimination against European children at a conference in Torino, Italy in November. Using examples from age discrimination cases around Europe, including an Austrian hotel that banned children and families as guests, she explored the EU’s legal possibilities in combating age discrimination.

The Lisbon Treaty prohibits discrimination on various grounds, and “age” discrimination is expressly included in the text. With the recent adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights will become a binding legal basis to combat discrimination on the basis of age.

EURONET recommends that the Commission ensures the mainstreaming of children’s rights in all EU actions and legislation, which will reduce discriminatory processes and impacts of EU policy making. The participation of children themselves in this respect is also very important, as they are able to give the best accounts of examples of age discrimination. More research into the ways that children may be treated differently on the basis of stereotypes in relation to their age needs to be undertaken to support the anti-discrimination measures of the Commission.


The EP LIBE Committee members have submitted more than 200 amendments to the report of Roberta Angelilli MEP, indicating a strong interest in the issue of children’s rights from the EP.

EURONET has submitted a briefing on the amendments, in which EURONET maintains expertise, and which will be supported or rejected by the LIBE Committee. This has been sent to all members of the LIBE Committee, and several EURONET members have also forwarded their own briefings on the amendments.

The vote on the report and the amendments will take place on 17 December in the LIBE Committee.

Please see the briefings on the amendments of NSPCC and the International Save the Children Alliance-Europe Group here.

UPDATE: Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)

The Justice and Civil Liberties Committee (“LIBE Committee”) of the European Parliament is developing the Multi-Annual Framework of the Fundamental Rights Agency. EURONET has been advocating for the inclusion of children’s rights based on the UN CRC in the Multi-Annual Framework in different consultations with the Agency, its management board and the Commission. On 18 October, EURONET participated in a hearing in the European Parliament and presented the following recommendations:

1. EURONET insists on including a reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Multi-Annual Framework;
2. EURONET demands a horizontal approach to deal with children’s rights in all areas of the Fundamental Rights Agency;
3. EURONET protests the lack of reference to socio-economic rights in the Multi-Annual Framework;

EURONET sees a need for a coherent and over-arching child rights and human rights policy in order to ensure the rights of the millions of children living in the EU.

The LIBE Committee is expected to adopt the report written by Michael Cashman MEP on 18 December, commenting on the Commission’s proposal. In January, the EP’s plenary is expected to adopt the report on the Multi-Annual Framework, for which the EP has only a consultative role. The Council is expected to adopt the Multi-Annual Framework after the EP has adopted its report.

Fundamental Rights Agency: S’cool Agenda for Young People

The Fundamental Rights Agency has launched a new campaign to inspire young people to take action for their rights and the rights of others. The campaign, called S’cool Agenda for Young People, aims to encourage young people to speak up and demand their rights in all areas of their lives, including education, employment, and social protection. EURONET supports the campaign and encourages its members to get involved.

For more information, please visit the FRA’s website at www.fra.europa.eu.
EURONET believes that the Fundamental Rights Agency can play an important role in guaranteeing human rights, including children’s rights, throughout Europe.

The Fundamental Rights Agency will also set up a Fundamental Rights Platform to consult and inform civil society on its activities. EURONET has participated and contributed to several consultations on this and will continue to do so.

Find the full EURONET briefing paper on the Multi-Annual Framework to the LIBE Committee at www.europeanchildrensnetwork.eu.

Citizens’ AGORA, European Parliament, 8 and 9 November 2007

EURONET participated in the European Parliament event Citizens’ Agora, in which civil society vocalized its say about the Lisbon Treaty prior to its submission for ratification for ratification in each Member State. The first day started with an inaugural session in which Mr. Hans-Gert Pöttering (President of the European Parliament), Mrs. Margot Wallström (Vice-President of the European Commission), Mr. Alexander Graf von Schwerin (Vice-President of the EESC), and Mr. Jo Leinen (Chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament) welcomed the participants.

After the introductory session an open debate took place, in which actors of civil society expressed their thoughts on the role of the Agora now and in the future. Five workshops were held in the afternoon session, and EURONET assisted in the workshop on rights, specifically contributing with a statement on children’s rights.

Articles 24 and 25 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights were strongly welcomed, because among other objectives, it promotes the rights of the children.

The second day of the AGORA started with workshops, and the final text approved by the working group included a reference to children’s rights, which was presented to the plenary session.

SOS Children’s Villages Assists in Developing Quality Standards for Childcare

EURONET member SOS Children’s Villages, along with International Foster Care Organization (IFCO) and Federation Internationale des Communautés Educatives (FICE), developed a set of 18 quality standards for out-of-home child care in Europe in a project called Quality4Children. The 18 standards each indicate the minimum quality norm required in the different care processes.

Quality4Care, officially launched by the European Parliament on June 13, used a methodology which included narrative interviews from children, caregivers, social workers and parents from 26 European countries.

For further information on the Quality4Children standards, please contact Kelig Puyet at kelig.puyet@sos-kd.org.

**CORRECTED** NSPCC criticises UK Government decision not to ban smacking

EURONET member, the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) has criticised the UK Government’s recent announcement that it will not change the law on smacking children. The NSPCC disagrees with the government’s view that the law currently in place is successful.

NSPCC chief executive Dame Mary Marsh said “We do not agree with the Government’s view that the law is working effectively. Section 58 has not improved protection for children.”

NSPCC vowed to continue campaigns for legal reform, to give children the same legal protection from assault that adults receive.

However, the NSPCC does agree with the government in its approach to providing parents with positive parenting support. “The NSPCC is committed to helping parents find alternatives to physical punishment,” Marsh said.

Download the NSPCC response to the UK Government consultation on the law on smacking, (August 2007) at http://www.nspcc.org.uk. This provides evidence showing that the current UK law does not provide adequate protection to children.

One Year Follow up Report to the UN Study on Violence against Children Released

Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro presented the first year follow up report to the UN Study on Violence against Children at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva on 17th November. It continues to show that violence is a serious problem in many countries, and some have taken steps to address it.

The report highlights the lack of data on violence against children, and the need for better research and monitoring. It also calls for more resources to be devoted to preventing violence and protecting children.

The report concludes that further action is needed to prevent violence against children, and to ensure that all children have access to the services they need to protect them.

For further information, please contact Remy Oudin at remy.oudin@unicef.org.

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Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro presented the first year follow up report to the UN Study on Violence against Children to the Third Committee of the 62nd UN General Assembly on 19 October, where over 20 delegations took the floor to discuss its recommendations. The follow up briefing reported on the distribution of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children and on progress made in the study since its dissemination one year ago.

The report also lays out the necessary strategy to further promote the implementation of the Study's recommendations. Prof. Pinheiro stated that a number of countries around the world are amending the legal framework for the protection of children from violence; however, it would take considerably more effort to implement the recommendations of the study.

The progress report is available on the Violence Study web site in English and French at www.violencestudy.org.

UNICEF: First Spokesperson on Child Violence Nominated

UNICEF nominated Sarah Jones as the first spokesperson on violence against children in New York on 19 October 2007. "We must all unite, no matter what social, economic or cultural background, to end violence against children," Ms. Jones said.

EURONET has called on the EU to nominate a UN Special Representative to combat violence against children.

Twenty-Three States Sign Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Twenty-three member states of the Council of Europe signed the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, a major step in the prevention of sexual offences against children.

This marks the first time an international treaty criminalizes sexual abuse, an act often committed by those close to the children and an act known to be extraordinarily damaging to children. The programme outlines preventative measures, as well as support programmes for victims of sexual abuse.

"Hands off children!": Council of Europe Seeks Ban on Corporal Punishment

The Council of Europe is calling on every European country to ban corporal punishment of children as part of a Europe-wide campaign. Good parenting should take the place of smacking, says the Council. EURONET is fully supporting this Council of Europe campaign and will continue work with its member organisations to ban physical and humiliating punishment of children within the EU Member States.

Portuguese Presidency: Conclusions of Justice Ministers on Child Protection

Ministers of Justice for Justice and Home Affairs met in Lisbon to address concerns of European citizens on issues of child protection in European Union societies. Click here to read the conclusions from the meeting.

Commission Responds to EESC’s Suggestions on the Strategy for the Rights of the Child

The European Commission responded to suggestions from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)'s list of proposals for the Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" in the Quarterly Review presented by the Commission. Key points urged by the EESC ranged from committing to clear timelines and objectives for the strategy to increasing the focus on reducing child poverty.

The Commission noted, for instance, that the Communication is to “tackle all the rights of all children, in Europe and throughout the world, without systematically referring to various sub-groups mentioned by the EESC,” specifically referring to the EESC’s desire to have a focus on the girl-child included.

Future strategies will be worked out by the Commission “after the conclusions and recommendations of the studies provided for in the Communication have been issued and also following the public consultation carried out in the context of the Green Paper.”

Click here to read the full Commission response to the issues raised by the EESC, which include:

- Creating comprehensive objectives with clear targets and timelines;
- Focusing more attention on the girl-child;
- Granting sufficient power to the child’s right coordinator;
- Future strategy;
- Implementing findings from the United Nation’s Study on Violence against Children;
- Member states’ commitments to existing European and International norms;
- Comparable indicators and consistent data;
- Development aid.
Commission Hopes to Foster Involvement of Young People

The European Commission published a Communication Paper on the promotion of young people’s participation in employment and in society this past September 2007. It aims to improve the transition from education to work by reducing rates of leaving school early and by providing more early school education, addressing youth issues in the EU’s Growth and Jobs Strategy, and by creating better links between business and education. For 2008, an initiative for a European quality charter on internship is also on the agenda.

The Commission also wants to encourage young people to be more active in civic life. Therefore, consultation and impact assessment on voluntary activities are expected to take place. Further action includes stronger involvement of young people in the decision-making process and in evaluating youth policies. Finally, the Commission plans an EU report on youth that will be published every three years together with the help of young people themselves.

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Events to Look Out for in 2007 - 2008

21-23 November: Malta, “Preventing social exclusion of children and young people in Europe: participation and early intervention”, Eurochild’s Annual Conference. Please check the Eurochild website for more information.

28 November: Brussels, Conference on developing European solutions to cross-border child sexual abuse. Save the Children and NSPCC. Contact Kathleen Spencer Chapman, NSPCC, or Marta Ballesteros, Save the Children Brussels.

28 November: Brussels, “Mutual learning tools for family-friendly policies and better childcare provision”, joint seminar organized by the Commission, the European Foundation for Improving Living Conditions and the OECD.

11 December: Brussels, EURONET Member Training Day on children’s rights in the EU and the EU Presidencies. Deadline for registration is 26 November. Please contact EURONET for further information.

11-12 December: New York, UN Special Session on children: Commemorative high-level plenary meeting, United Nations.

14-16 December: Madrid, Workshop on “Social investments and social protection as productive factors,” ICSW Europa. Contact Thea Meinema, Secretary General of ICSW Europa.


20 February-27 May 2008: Distance Learning Course on “Monitoring Children’s Rights”. HREA (Human Rights Education Associates) organized this course for the staff of human rights/children’s rights NGOs, intergovernmental and government agencies, children’s advocates and child-related professionals. Application deadline is 1 December 2007. Please find more information on the HREA website.

25-29 March 2008: Spain, First International Congress for Blind and Partially Sighted Children: “Listening to Children”. World Blind Union (WBU), Children’s Committee, ONCE, UNICEF, ICEVI, Save the Children. Contact Enrique Pérez, WBU Secretary General, Tel: +34 91 589 45 33.


Calls / Consultations

In preparation for the Third World Congress 2008 “Sexual Exploitation” in Brazil, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ECPAT International aim to broadly consult their members and other concerned groups and individuals. Please check the ECPAT website for more information. ★

The UN Human Rights Council has now selected the first countries to be examined under the new Universal Periodic Review mechanism. The following countries will be reviewed over the course of next year’s Council sessions: Bahrain, Ecuador, Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia, Finland, United Kingdom, India, Brazil, Philippines, Algeria, Poland, Netherlands, South Africa, Czech Republic, Argentina. The deadline for submissions by NGOs to the 1st Universal Periodic Review session (scheduled 7 to 18 April 2008) was extended to 20 November 2007. ★
A child participation European Seminar will provide an opportunity to share and discuss experiences in the EU by Ministries, International Organisations, NGOs and Universities on policies, programmes, research and best practices on child participation in daily life. Those interested in making a presentation or sharing experiences can send their paper (a maximum of two, concerning two different contexts, per institution) to childoneurope@minori.it. Find the application form here. Deadline: 30 November 2007. To be drafted in English or French and returned to: Ms. Vanna Cherici or Claudia Stanghellini, ChildONEurope Secretariat, Istituto degli Innocenti, Piazza SS Annunziata 12, 50122 Firenze, Italy. Fax +39 055 2037344, or preferably by e-mail at: childoneurope@minori.it; cc: cherici@minori.it or stanghellini@minori.it. Location: Florence, Italy. Date: 31 January 2008.

Call for Papers: Child and Youth Research in the 21st Century: A Critical Appraisal: The Center for the Study of Childhood and Adolescence, as the founder of the International Childhood and Youth Research Network, will be hosting the conference "Child and Youth Research in the 21st Century: A Critical Appraisal" at the European University in Cyprus. The Network's mission is to promote, internationally, the inter-disciplinary study of children and young people in order to further raise awareness and understanding of issues that affect their well-being. Please visit the International Childhood and Youth Research Network website for more information on the call for papers and a registration form. European University Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus.


Publications

United Nations Secretary General: "The Global Report 2007 – Ending Legalised Violence against Children". Published as a follow up to the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children. It contains a table of legality of corporal punishment in the home, schools, penal systems and alternative care in every State in the world.

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre: "Digest on Promoting the Rights of Children with Disabilities". This is an attempt to provide perspective on the situation of the some 200 million children with disabilities all over the world. The Digest includes several reports from different countries, taking into account the view of persons with disabilities and their families as well as staff members from different organizations. Furthermore, submitted country reports by Member States to the United Nations are included.

Council of Europe: "Views on Positive Parents and Non-Violent Upbringing" (2007). This book presents the results of a two-day consultation with children and parents from 19 countries and includes exercises and questions the children and parents used, which could be used in other similar consultations in the member states.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation and The Open University: "Early Childhood and Primary Education: Transitions in the lives of young children" (2007). This is the second publication in the series, Early Childhood in Focus, and deals with the global challenge of 'education for all' children. The focus is on the implications of growth, early childhood education and care, including a reappraisal of traditional concepts of school readiness, as well as a review of strategies required to ensure continuity in children's experiences of successful transitions.

ISCI and Springer Publishing House: Child Indicators Research (CIR). The International Society for Child Indicators and Springer Publishing House have launched a new journal. The journal covers topics in the field of economic well-being, psychological well-being, physical health and safety, civic life skills, religion and environmental skills, education, social behavior, child welfare for vulnerable children, time use and activities, as well as social work and social policy. Contributions are highly welcomed by the publishers.

Plan International: "Each and Every Child: Understanding and Working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations". This report comprises challenges that child-focused organizations have to deal with when working with the poorest children and those from the most difficult situations. The publication argues for a more holistic approach, particularly in the field of prevention. It can be used by staff members as a guide on how to approach these groups of children from an integrated, child-centered and rights-based development perspective.

Terre des Hommes: "Laugh, Run and Move to Develop Together. Games with a Psychosocial Aim". Following a project, "Movement, Games and Sport for children’s psychosocial development," the authors Jean-Pierre Heiniger and Michele Meuwly developed a manual for games and sport activities. In order to provide to those in charge of children a play tool which integrates the psychosocial approach and uses the phases of learning by experience.


This newsletter was written by Emilie White, Juliane Kube, Larissa Majlessi, and Mieke Schuurman. For questions on the newsletter, or removal from the mailing list, please email europeanchildrennetwork@skynet.be

www.europeanchildrensnetwork.eu